

King, Prodi discuss U.N.-Iraq accord

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein and Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi Wednesday exchanged views on the agreement reached on Monday between Iraq and the U.N. In a telephone conversation, King Hussein reaffirmed Jordan's principled stand on conflict resolution, noting that Jordan believes in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. Mr. Prodi praised the King's efforts to defuse the crisis and his valuable contribution to the success of the secretary general's mission in Iraq. King Hussein and Mr. Prodi reaffirmed the need for full compliance to the agreement in preparation for lifting the sanctions on Iraq, and putting an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people. The two leaders also discussed the latest developments on the Palestinian-Israeli track and stressed the need for intensifying efforts to overcome the obstacles and restoring the peace process to track.

Queen hopes knight ceremony did not take Elton John out of his way

LONDON (AFP) — Queen Elizabeth II Tuesday apologized to rock singer Sir Elton John for interfering with his busy international programme as he accepted knighthood. "Her Majesty said she didn't interfere with my arrangements," said John. "She said I'm not the sort of person to be put off. I flew back to LA yesterday and I'm going to Australia Thursday, but there's no way I would miss this."

Whoopi Goldberg to be presenter at 70th Academy Award

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Whoopi Goldberg will be an Oscar presenter for the third time at 70th Academy Awards. Goldberg will perform in "The Best Supporting Actor" hosted by the event in 1997 and 1998. Comedian actor Billy Crystal is hosting the March 7 event this year.

Earl Spencer settles out of court with angry husband

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — Earl Spencer has settled out of court with the husband of a woman he became romantically involved with. Cape Argus newspaper said Tuesday. Don Collins, 42, claimed in papers in the High Court here in 1996 that Earl Spencer was having an affair with his 37-year-old wife, Chantal. He claimed \$30,000 from Spencer's damages for "adultery, affection" in the bed down on his name. Spencer, who lives in London, counterclaimed \$100,000 from Collins for defamation and invasion of privacy. The Argus said Collins's lawyer was out of court and that the matter had been settled out of court and that terms are to remain confidential.

Airline considers banning Oasis after 'outrageous behaviour'

PERTH (AFP) — British rock group Oasis could be banned by the Perth airport after "outrageous behaviour" on a flight to Australia last Tuesday. The band and their entourage were accused of abusing staff and other passengers, lighting cigarettes and generally behaving offensively during a seven-hour flight from Hong Kong to Perth on Monday. The airline will refuse to carry the group again without a guarantee of "outstanding behaviour," said Cathay Pacific public relations manager, Ker Morrison. "Their performance was pretty poor."

Yeltsin holiday home goes up in flames

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian President Boris Yeltsin's holiday home in a lakeside residence, a lake-side complex near Irkutsk, Siberia, has gone up in flames. NTV Television reported Yeltsin welcomed German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to his residence in July 1997 or a day of fishing. The house was a traditional wooden building. The television said the fire was apparently caused by a short circuit in the television station and

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Chirac promises Arafat help to spur peace process

PARIS (R) — French President Jacques Chirac promised Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday to try and help restart the stalled Middle East peace process, a presidential source said. "Yasser Arafat told President Chirac of the current problems in the peace process. The president reiterated France's hope that the peace process be relaunched on the basis of existing accords and that he would act to this end along with the United States," the source said.

Netanyahu reshuffles cabinet

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced several cabinet changes on Wednesday following the death last month of his education minister. National Religious Party (NRP) leader Yitzhak Levy, the former transport minister, has taken over the education and culture portfolio, while Shaul Yaalom, another NRP member, becomes transport minister. The reshuffle, which was approved by the Israeli Knesset or parliament, followed the death in January of education minister Zviulun Hammer, who led the NRP for 22 years. The party represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and has nine seats in the parliament. In addition to Mr. Hammer's education post, Mr. Levy took over the culture portfolio under a rotation accord between the PNR and the Orthodox Sephardic Jewish religious party Shas which has 10 parliamentary seats. The leader of the NRP's parliamentary bloc Hanan Portat also assumes the chairmanship of the parliamentary law committee, replacing Mr. Yaalom.

Israel, Palestinians to sign UNESCO accord

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel and the Palestinians are due to sign an accord Thursday on cooperation in the fields of culture, education and science under the auspices of UNESCO, the Foreign Ministry said. Representatives of Israel, the Palestinian National Authority and UNESCO will take part in the signing ceremony in the West Bank town of Ramallah, the ministry said in a statement. UNESCO will supervise and fund 11 projects covering education on peace, medical research and the publication of an anthology of Israeli and Palestinian literature.

Sudan military claims 'successful' operations against rebels

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese military has carried out "successful" operations against rebels in the east and south of the country, the Al Rai Al Aam newspaper reported Wednesday, quoting the army spokesman. The operations were conducted in unspecified locations in east Sudan, and in southern Sudan's Bahr Al Ghazal region and East Equatoria province, according to General Abdul Rahman Siral Kheirim. "Security and stability have been restored and the armed forces are now exercising full control of the situation in those areas," the paper quoted Mr. Kheirim as saying. The report did not say when the operations took place, or give any casualty figures.

Security Council starts drafting resolution on Iraq-U.N. accord

Annan may appoint Lakhdar Brahimi as his personal representative in Iraq — report

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MAJOR POWERS from the Security Council began work Wednesday on a resolution to endorse the Iraqi weapons inspections deal and warn Baghdad against any attempt to fudge the accord. Britain said it was prepared to take the lead in drafting the resolution that would put Security Council elout behind the accord signed by Secretary General Kofi Annan in Baghdad, diplomats said. "We are ready to put some ideas around," British Ambassador John Weston told reporters as he went into a Security Council meeting. The United States was seeking strong language that would put Iraq on notice that it would face air

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strikes if it violated the accord due to be signed Monday, according to diplomats. But Russia maintained that a Security Council resolution was not necessary to give the agreement legal force and France said it would oppose language that would automatically unleash force, they said. Mr. Annan sat down with chief arms expert Richard Butler Wednesday to discuss details of the new inspections regime for Iraq, a U.N. spokesman said. Mr. Annan, his legal counsellor Hans Correll and Mr. Butler held "discussions of the practical details of the inspections process that need to be worked out," said spokesman Fred Eckhard. In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov noted that the U.N.

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agreement had been well-received by the Security Council on Tuesday and stressed that there should be no threat of force. "There are no grounds to talk of really resorting to force against Iraq. Resorting to force would be unjustified," Mr. Primakov said. Diplomats cautioned that it may take "days" for a draft resolution to reach the Security Council. Weston said it was "quite possible" that it would be presented before the end of the week. The 15-member council was to hear a report from Swedish diplomat Stefan de Mistura, who led a team of cartographers to Baghdad earlier this month to survey the area of eight presidential sites Iraq had placed off-limits to U.N. weapons inspectors. Mr. Mistura said last week in Baghdad that the

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eight sites were smaller than U.N. inspectors had believed, citing a territory of 31.5 square kilometres. The Washington Post said Wednesday that Mr. Annan offered a detailed explanation of his agreement with Iraq, but U.S. officials said they still had many unanswered questions. Mr. Annan spoke with U.S. President Bill Clinton by telephone late Tuesday to assure him that the arrangements he will make for inspections by the special group of eight presidential sites in Iraq will meet key U.S. goals, two unidentified senior administration officials told the daily. A senior U.S. official told the daily his government is especially concerned about how much control the U.N.

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Ma'an deputies complain of bad conditions resulting from curfew

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A four-day curfew imposed on the southern town of Ma'an following unrest triggered by a pro-Iraq rally has prevented at least five families from burying their dead, Ma'an Lower House deputies told reporters on Wednesday. Deputy Nayef Abu Hilal said the body of his uncle, who died three days ago, remained at the morgue for at least two days because the authorities only granted two members of the family permission to bury him due to the curfew. "They also did not allow his family to receive condolences at their home," he said. Deputy Wailid Awajan said the burial of his sister, who died on Monday, was delayed until Wednesday morning because of the curfew. The two deputies further said living conditions remained harsh under the curfew, that was imposed on Sunday, while army and police officers continued their house-to-house searches for weapons and explosives. Forty-five deputies asked the government to end the siege and to release over 100 residents arrested in the crackdown. One man was killed and over 20 injured in the town in two days of riots that started after Friday prayers. The government blamed Leih Shbeilat, head of the Jordan Engineers Association, for instigating the riots. Mr. Shbeilat is currently being detained and will be tried by the state security court. The latest onrest was the third the city has witnessed in the last nine years. In 1989, the year that triggered the country's democratisation process, scores of people took to the streets to protest price hikes. In 1996, Ma'an also erupted in protest to the government of Abdul Karim Kabariti's decision to lift bread subsidies. The deputies complained

House voices pride in King's efforts

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday voiced pride in the efforts made by His Majesty King Hussein to defuse the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations. In a cable to King Hussein, the House said: "Your Majesty's tireless efforts and continuous contacts with the U.N. secretary general and the parties concerned, and those of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan have contributed to the agreement reached between Iraq and the U.N. secretary general," thus sparing the Iraqi people and the entire region the catastrophic consequences of a military strike. The House added that the King's efforts have paved the ground for making concerted efforts to put an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people and enable them to play their full role. The House expressed support for the King's efforts in defence of the just Arab causes, and safeguarding the freedom and dignity of Arab citizens.

of water and food shortages, especially bread and baby milk, caused by the curfew that has been gradually eased.

With no telephone lines, the city's 30,000 inhabitants remain cut off from the world for the fourth day running. Deputy Ahmad Khattab said he was certain the government will sympathise with the conditions of Ma'an residents and understand the urgent need to lift the curfew and reopen schools so that students can resume their education. The government has said the curfew might be fully lifted as of Friday, after 50 search teams complete their sweep of the town. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour told the House that police found a substantial amount of weapons during their house searches, in which they also arrested many suspects to question them on their role in the onrest. For many of Ma'an's tribal society, owning weapons is an established custom even though carrying unlicensed firearms is prohibited in Jordan. Dr. Ensour, who is also the information minister, said police found explosive material, prohibited medical supplies, and illegal substances such as marijuana and other drugs.

He added that the curfew has been eased since Tuesday, "allowing citizens two hours of unrestricted movement each in the

U.N.: Weapons inspectors need to be more sensitive

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The draft agreement with Iraq being considered by the U.N. Security Council will require a change in behaviour from U.N. weapons inspectors as well as Iraq, U.N. officials here said Wednesday. The agreement U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan signed with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein Monday to open up presidential palaces to inspection requires U.N. weapons inspectors to respect Iraq's "dignity."

"Obviously dignity refers not just to not battering down the doors of presidential palaces but also to not throwing litter in the neighbourhoods," said U.N. humanitarian affairs coordinator, Denis Halliday. "Unfortunately the behaviour of a relatively small number of inspectors has given all of us a bad reputation and the secretary general was aware of this and made reference to it," he said.

Iraqi officials have repeatedly complained about the behaviour of weapons inspectors from the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq's disarmament, which they dubbed the "enemy" before this week's agreement. Mr. Halliday said the scientists brought in by UNSCOM for two or three weeks to carry out particular inspections generally showed great respect for Iraqi sensitivities.

But he said there was a second type of UNSCOM official, the 40 Chilean aircrew and 40 mainly ex-military administrative staff on six-month rotation, who were in some cases rather less sensitive. "They are not diplomats, not particularly courteous, rough diamonds as it were," he said. "They are fond of a drink or two, carry their radios like six-shooters... behave loudly in restaurants and generally can be quite obnoxious."

He said that UNSCOM staff invariably dominated the twice-weekly bar night at the U.N.'s headquarters in sanctions-hit Baghdad where all other bars and clubs have been closed for the past four years. "There isn't a bar, there isn't

(Continued on page 3)

Pope opens lent season

ROME (R) — Pope John Paul ushered the world's 980 million Roman Catholics into the pre-Easter lent season on Wednesday, urging them to repent for their sins and re-open dialogue with God. "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with tears and cries," the Pope said, reading from the Scriptures during his homily at a traditional Ash Wednesday service in the Church of Santa Sabina on Rome's Aventine Hill. "At the beginning of lent, we pray...we can accept God's invitation for conversion...Let us pray for our hearts to open up to dialogue with God," the 77-year-old Polish pontiff said. In the Christian calendar Ash Wednesday marks the start of the 40-day penitential lent season which ends on Easter Sunday. The Pope and other priests rubbed ashes on the heads of those who attended the mass in a ritual reminding Christians of mortality.



Israeli border-police arrest a Palestinian for throwing stones during clashes in this refugee camp on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

Israel raids West Bank refugee camps, arrests six Palestinians

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FIERCE CLASHES erupted Wednesday at a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank after Israeli forces arrested six people during an overnight raid and blockaded the entrance to the camp. Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli soldiers who retaliated with tear gas, and sporadic fist fights broke out at the Kalandia and Jelazoun refugee camps north of Ramallah and in the El Aroub Camp north of Hebron, the spokeswoman said. Israel Radio said the arrests came in response to pro-Iraqi protests staged in the West Bank recently. An Israeli army spokeswoman said on Wednesday that the six Palestinians were suspected of "violent actions." The searches coincided with the anniversary Wednesday of the massacre of 29 Palestinians by a Jewish settler in a Hebron mosque in 1994. The anniversary has been marked in the past by violent clashes and by Islamist suicide bombings against Israel occupation

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forces against Israeli security forces and civilians. "Army and border police forces carried out extensive security activities overnight in the refugee camps Kalandia and Jelazoun near Ramallah and in El Aroub, north of Hebron," the spokeswoman said. "In the course of the operation six Palestinians were arrested on suspicion of participation in violent actions against security forces and Israeli civilians." Troops in the Kalandia Camp also sealed off an alley the army said had been a focus of stone-throwing. "The operations were carried out after an increase in the throwing of stones and other objects at troops and Israeli civilians in these areas," the spokeswoman said.

Algerian troops kill 95 rebels in offensive — papers

PARIS (R) — Algerian

troops have killed 95 Islamist rebels in the latest stage of their current offensive, mostly in western areas where they have been backed by airpower, Algerian newspapers said on Wednesday. L'Authentique newspaper said 57 Islamists had been killed in continuing military operations in the Tlemcen region, 440 kilometre west of Algiers. It did not say exactly when they were killed. Liberte newspaper said military aircraft pounded the area of Ain Kebira, near Tlemcen, to clear the way for the advance of troops who attacked guerrillas, killing 13.

Al Watan newspaper, giving

a glimpse from the scene of the fighting in Tlemcen province, said that "filthy, sinking corpses of rebels [had been found]." Elsewhere in Algeria government forces killed 25 rebels in the past three days, including two gunmen shot dead in Algiers, said Al Watan, Liberte and Al Khabar. Government troops launched a wave of offensives on Islamists after rebels massacred more than 1,200 civilians during the Holy Month of Ramadan, ending late in January. Algerian newspapers said more than 250 rebels had been killed in the military operations, before Wednesday's reports of the latest fighting.

day's reports of the latest

fighting. Rebels have continued to ambush soldiers and set off bombs on roads or railway lines, killing more than 65 people since last Thursday. The latest report of killings of civilians, said Wednesday that three teenage shepherds had had their throats cut Saturday in the Ain Defla area, southwest of Algiers. Western estimates say more than 65,000 people have been killed in the violence that has gripped Algeria since early 1992, when the authorities cancelled a general election in which Islamists had taken a commanding lead.

U.S. military hit in sustained cyber attack by hackers — Pentagon

WASHINGTON (AFP) —

Unidentified hackers penetrated unclassified U.S. military computers in a widespread, two week cyber attack that hit all the military services, a top Pentagon official said Wednesday.

The attack, the largest known to have hit Pentagon computer networks, did not appear to be related to the crisis in Iraq, U.S. Deputy Defence Secretary John Hamre said. "But I think it was in many ways a wake up call," said Mr. Hamre. At a breakfast with defence reporters, Mr. Hamre said the attacks dur-

ing the last two weeks were

"fairly heavy duty" and "probably of the same character of previous things, which was more of the quality of voyeurism or vandalism." "It was widespread and it was modestly sophisticated," he said. "We now do believe it was unrelated to Iraq but we have no precise assurance of that." No classified military computers were penetrated in all the military services were hit to one degree or another, he said. It appeared to be carried out by an individual or small group of people using

a small number of Internet

servers, he said. Elements of the attack were U.S. based but the hackers may have used overseas nodes as well, according to Mr. Hamre. "It was not known what information they obtained or what their objective was because they used a system of 'trap doors' that prevented their being tracked, he said. "As we saw it happening, we would quickly go in and try to close the 'trap door' and we do not know what other data may have been extorted," he said.

Turkish students confront Istanbul police on university dress code

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Some 5,000 Turkish students confronted riot police in front of Istanbul University Wednesday in a protest over the school's strict secular dress code.

It was the second day of protests by students seeking re-admission to campus despite a directive banning Islamic-style beards on men or headscarves on women.

One policeman and one student were injured Tuesday when security forces wielding truncheons dispersed students trying to break through the main gate to the university.

The protest broke up but students said they would continue their movement until they were allowed back onto campus.

Police in full riot gear blocked the entrance to the

university Wednesday as protesters, neatly separated by sex, chanted slogans like "freedom for education, end to dictatorship" and "our educational rights cannot be taken from us" and "Muslim power won't back down."

The demonstration overflowed from the university into the square in front of the Beyazit Mosque, a traditional rallying place for Islamist protests.

Police forces numbered about 900 by noon and water cannons were standing by.

The protests were sparked by a directive issued by the university's rector on Monday prohibiting students wearing headscarves or long beards from attending classes or entering the historical school's grounds.

Authorities view head-

scarves and long beards as a religious statement and have prohibited them in government offices, schools and universities in line with the strictly enforced separation of church and state enshrined in the country's constitution.

"We will continue our struggle," a 25-year-old female student said Wednesday. "There will be more and more of us every day, because we stir the hearts and the souls."

In spite of earlier bans by the Turkish government, headscarves had not posed a problem at Istanbul University until now, a group of female students wearing scarves said Tuesday.

"They [the authorities] think it's political, but it's only religion for us," 18-year-old Ayse Oldamar told AFP.

The university's principal, Kemal Alemdaroglu, decreed Monday that students wearing headscarves or Islamic-style beards or who did not have the identity card which requires a clean-shaven photograph would be barred from attending classes.

The directive followed a fresh drive by the education ministry to enforce the Turkish Republic's strict secular dress code in schools.

In a circular to all schools earlier this month, the ministry issued a reminder to students and teachers of the dress code which restricts headscarves to Koran classes in the religious Imam Hatip schools.

Investigations were subsequently launched against several hundred teachers accused of breaching the code.



SETTLER VISITS GOLDSTEIN GRAVE: A Jewish settler from the settlement of Kiryat Arba Wednesday kisses the gravestone of Baruch Goldstein, the U.S.-born settler who massacred 29 Muslim worshippers in Hebron four years ago. Buried in a small park in the Jewish settlement, Goldstein is revered by the Kiryat Arba settlers, who are resistant to calls from other Israelis to move his grave to a conventional graveyard elsewhere (AP photo)

Convicted killer of French colonel escapes from Lebanese prison

BEIRUT (AP) — A former Lebanese army corporal convicted of killing the French military attaché in Beirut 12 years ago has escaped from prison, police said Wednesday.

Eight gunmen, two of them posing as security agents, helped Hussein Mustafa Tleiss, 37, escape from Roumieh prison, north of Beirut, at 6 p.m. local time Tuesday after handcuffing the sentry, said police officials. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Tleiss, a Shiite Muslim from the town of Brial in eastern Lebanon's Baqa'a Valley, was convicted by a military court in April 1994 for the Sept. 18, 1986, fatal

shooting of Col. Rene Goutiere, the military attaché at the French embassy in Beirut.

He was sentenced to death, but the verdict was commuted to life in prison with hard labour under a 1991 general amnesty law covering politically motivated crimes committed during the 1975-90 civil war.

Mr. Tleiss was supposed to appear Wednesday before an investigating magistrate to answer questions about a 1987 assassination attempt on former President Camille Chamoun.

During the trial, Mr. Tleiss confessed to killing Goutiere. During appeals

hearings, he claimed for the first time that he was ordered to kill Goutiere by Hizbollah guerrilla group.

He said the slaying was in retaliation for a 1983 French air raid on Baalbek, a Hizbollah stronghold in eastern Lebanon.

The air strike followed Shiite extremist suicide bombings in Beirut on Oct. 23, 1983 that killed 59 French paratroopers and 241 U.S. servicemen. All victims were part of a four-nation multinational peace-keeping force trying to stop the civil war.

There was no explanation at the time why Mr. Tleiss, or those behind him, waited three years to kill Goutiere.

Israeli judge offers compromise on U.S. teen suspect

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli judge put forward a compromise Wednesday in the case of a Jewish American teenager seeking to escape extradition to the United States where he is wanted for a brutal murder.

The judge has suggested that Samuel Sheinbein, 17, return freely to the United States to face trial but that he can return to Israel to serve out any prison sentence, judicial officials said.

Extradition hearings started on Sunday against Sheinbein, who has been in Israeli custody since fleeing the United States in September.

The judge's offer, which would avoid the complicated legal battle over his extradition, will be considered by the defence next week, the sources said.

Sheinbein was arrested by Israeli police on his arrival from the United States where he is accused of murdering, burning and dismembering a young Hispanic man, Alfredo Enrique Tello, in Maryland.

The United States sent a formal extradition request in November shortly after Israeli Attorney General Eliakim Rubinstein ruled that the youth could not claim Israeli citizenship.

Israeli nationals cannot be extradited.

The attorney general had ruled that Sheinbein's claim for citizenship was unfounded because his father left Israel as a child before the adoption of a 1952 citizenship law and subsequently tried to obtain both U.S. and Canadian nationality.

Israel asks U.S. for more anti-missile funding

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel has asked the United States to expand the Arrow anti-missile missile project and provide funding for a third battery of missiles to be deployed in Israel, the Maariv newspaper said Wednesday.

The request was submitted during the recent tensions in the Gulf, and the Americans are taking it into consideration, the paper said.

Officials at Israel's defence ministry did not immediately respond to requests from the Associated Press for comment.

The United States has contributed about \$250 million so far to fund the joint U.S.-Israeli Arrow 2 anti-ballistic missile programme, intended to

defend against Scud missile attacks such as those that hit Israeli cities during the 1991 Gulf war.

Maariv said that in light of the continued threat from Iraq, as well as the long-range missile capabilities of Syria and Iran, it became clear that the original plan to equip Israel with two missile batteries was

insufficient.

The system was originally supposed to become operational in 1998, but the target date has reportedly been pushed back until at least 1999.

The system costs about \$1.6 billion; the United States is paying for about two-thirds of that.

Thirty-seven killed in fighting in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Rival Somali factions fought in two southern towns Wednesday, leaving 37 people dead and 54 wounded, a spokesman for one of them said.

The clashes took place in Baidoa and Hudur between the Rabaanwein Resistance Army

(RRA) and militiamen of warlord Hussein Mohammad Aidede.

The RRA spokesman, Mohammad Aden Qalile, said the faction's militia killed 24 of Mr. Aidede's fighters and lost 13 men.

He said 28 of the rival forces and 24 RRA fighters were also

wounded in the fighting, which erupted after mid-night on Tuesday.

Mr. Qalile said the RRA was in full control of Hudur.

The RRA fighters captured two armed wagons belonging to Mr. Aidede's militiamen during the fighting, which involved the use

of heavy machineguns and rocket-propelled grenades.

Baidoa, 250 km northwest of Mogadishu, is the planned venue for a national reconciliation conference due to start on March 31 to set up a transitional government to end seven years of fighting among warlords.

Syria calls for end to 'double standards' over Iraq, Israel

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria demanded Wednesday that the United Nations apply to Israel the same pressures they applied against Iraq to make it give up weapons of mass destruction.

"The United States and the United Nations should now be cross-examined and what was imposed on Iraq should be [imposed] on Israel, because the policy of double standards has become totally unacceptable and poisons international relations," wrote the daily Al Baath, the voice of the ruling party.

The newspaper congratulated the United Nations on its accord with Baghdad on arms inspections, calling the body "the only party legally empowered to look for fair and honourable solutions to conflicts."

But it called on the United Nations to see its success with Iraq as "an example for resolving other problems, notably the Israel-Arab conflict which has been complicated by the policies of the leaders in Tel Aviv."

Syria's official daily Al Thawra wrote that "Washington no longer has any pretext for keeping silent

about Israel, which tramples U.N. resolutions and has nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of the most sophisticated kind, yet which submits to no international inspection."

Al Thawra said it was "unacceptable" for Washington to "mobilise armadas" to force Iraqi compliance with U.N. resolutions when "Israel continues to overtly defy them without being sanctioned."

Another official daily, Tishrin, called for "exposing Israel's serious violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions and the principles of international law."

Market for Saddam kitsch holds steady in Amman

By Kurt Schork
Reuters

AMMAN — The market for Saddam Hussein kitsch was so strong in Amman on Wednesday that, Fudaf Afghani ordered another 30 dozen T-shirts with the Iraqi ruler's face superimposed on a map of the Arab World.

"We sold more than 300 of these in the last week and I just placed an order for more today," said Afghani, proprietor of a string of shops catering mostly to tourists.

"Most were purchased by foreign journalists or by Arab tourists from North Africa. It's a novelty. People are astonished when they see them. We sold thousands of them during the

Gulf war. Saddam is a hero to most Arabs."

The T-shirt sells for about \$3 and comes with a free Saddam pin. Also available are Saddam watches, ranging in price from \$70 to \$100. Afghani wears one himself.

Few Jordanians were in the market for the Saddam Hussein line of leisure wear on Wednesday, but many passers-by gave the "thumbs-up" sign of approval when they saw a television crew filming the T-shirts on display outside Afghani's shop.

"Saddam is tops, tops" shouted a youth as he strolled past with friends. "Clinton no good, very bad man. United States bad. Britain bad."

Demonised in the West as a brutal oppressor of his own peo-

ple and a danger to his neighbours and world peace, Saddam is viewed very differently by ordinary Arabs, who are far more concerned with the threat they perceive from Israel.

The deal signed in Baghdad on Monday to defuse the crisis over U.N. arms inspections in Iraq has tarnished President Saddam's image in Jordan by reinforcing his reputation as the only Arab leader brave and strong enough to stand up to American power.

The United States and Britain, America's staunchest ally during the latest Gulf crisis, advertised themselves as guarantors of peace in the Middle East.

But many Arabs accuse the Anglo-American alliance of creating and sustaining the state of Israel at Arab expense, and of

plotting to keep Islamic nations weak and divided.

More than half of Jordan's population is of Palestinian origin. Hundreds of thousands of its people yearn to return to lands lost to Israel in various wars since 1947.

"We Arabs have been betrayed many times by the British since 1917 and now we are being bullied by the Americans, so to us Saddam does not seem so bad," said Afghani.

"Britain is finished here because it is weak and has deceived us. The United States is a young country, a virgin country. It could rule the world if it were just. But Washington pays very much attention to the Jews and none at all to the Arabs."

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
14:10 The Dinky Di's
14:30 Energy Express
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 NBA
18:00 Drama — Marker
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Big Brother Jack
20:00 Trivial Pursuit
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman
21:10 The Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:25 Feature film — Frame Up
23:59 Comedy — Never The Taiwan
00:30 End of T.N.

Friday Programmes
14:10 Cartoon — Teddy Ruxpin
14:30 Wishbone
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 Children Drama — Lucky Luke
18:00 Tarzan
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Educational Programme
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Friends
20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

20:30 The Album Show
21:10 The Adventures of Brisco County
22:00 News in English
22:30 Comedy — Almost Home
23:50 End of T.N.

PRAYER TIMES

04:46 Fajr
06:03 (Sunrise) Duha
11:49 Dhuhur
14:02 Asr
17:34 Maghreb
18:51 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 624853/634811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.
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German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 654932

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Sunny to partly cloudy weather conditions will prevail with temperatures around average and winds northerly light to moderate. In Aqaba, clouds will appear at different altitudes, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 06/15
Aqaba 11/22
Deserts 04/18
Jordan Valley 11/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 45 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab 758848
Dr. Khalil Jhalil 740740
Dr. Waleed Al Masri 675485
Dr. Youssef Rashid 875792
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdersen pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qana 281484
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Waleed Halaseh 982799
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalid Maternity 644281/6
Akkleh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine Shmeisani 669131
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667279
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:

ZARQA Govt. Hospital 091983323
ZARQA National Hospital 091900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 091986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 091990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 021272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 021247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 031314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Sanaa (RJ)
08:25 Bombay (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
07:25 Moscow (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:45 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:10 Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:20 Athens (RJ)
19:35 Larnaca (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
23:00 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)
06:40 Beirut, London (BA)
08:00 Beirut (ME)
11:20 London (BA)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:00 Algiers (AH)
15:55 Doha (QR)
16:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
17:00 Muscat, Dubai (EK)
17:30 Rome (AZ)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
08:00 Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW)
(For Thursday and Friday)
07:45 Aqaba (RW)
09:05 Amman (QALIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 Amman (QALIA) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

Royal Wings
(For Thursday and Friday)
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Aqaba (RW)
09:30 Amman (QALIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QALIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)



Her Majesty Queen Noor meets Wednesday with AMIDEAST President William Rugh and Country Director Janine Tal (Photo by George Crystal)

Queen meets with AMIDEAST president, country director

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Wednesday met with American-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST) President William Rugh and AMIDEAST Country Director Janine Tal at Bab Al Salam Palace, according to a press release.

The Queen discussed AMIDEAST's "Arab Heritage Fund," which was established to improve Americans' understanding of the Arab World and its people by substantially expanding the distribution of educational materials to thousands of schools all across the United States.

This programme, made possible by the fund, will put accurate and balanced educational materials into the hands of tens of thousands of American teachers. They will then be able to introduce primary and secondary students to the richness of Arab history and culture, the influence of Arab and Islamic civilisation on the Western world, and Islam's shared heritage with Judaism and Christianity, the statement read.

According to Mrs. Tal, AMIDEAST, with resources from the fund, will select "those high quality educational resources about the Arab World, review them for suitability for use in American schools, and dramatically expand our ability to bring them to the attention of teachers and students across America. The fund will also support the development of new materials, such as AMIDEAST's forthcoming educational video, 'The Arab World and its People'."

She added that AMIDEAST has a five-year plan under the Arab Heritage Fund to increase the reach of the programme into American schools and estimates that it will have an impact on more than 2.6 million American students.

AMIDEAST, which was founded in 1951, is a private, non-profit organisation promoting cooperation and understanding between Americans and the people of the Middle East and North Africa through education, information and development assistance programmes. Headquartered in Washington D.C., it has a network of offices in Jordan, Egypt, the West Bank/Gaza Strip, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Tunisia. Its services include educational advising and testing training programmes, technical assistance, English-language programmes and public outreach services, the statement concluded.

Zarqa court finds mayor, newspaper not guilty of slandering Parliament

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — The Zarqa Court of First Instance, presided over by Judge Asmar Khasawneh, yesterday cleared the Zarqa Mayor Mustafa Fayad and Al Sabeel weekly newspaper of slander charges levelled at both by Parliament last year.

In a simply worded ruling, Judge Khasawneh wrote that Dr. Fayad, Al Sabeel Editor-in-Chief Afet Joutan and Al

Sabeel reporter Taray Abbas could not be found guilty of slander for publishing statements by Dr. Fayad calling Lower House deputies "liars."

After the ruling, a spokesman for Al Sabeel said the paper considered the issue closed, adding that "we were very happy with the work of our lawyer, and this is the ruling that we expected from our judiciary."

Dr. Fayad was interviewed along with his predecessor

Yasser Omari last February by Mr. Abbas, who quoted him as saying "three-fourths of the deputies are liars" and "I do not like the whole Parliament, that is my opinion."

His statements infuriated the Lower House, and Speaker Sa'ad Haydar sent a letter to then-Minister of Justice Abdul Karim Daghni requesting that he take legal action.

The mayor was consequently ordered detained by

the Zarqa prosecutor for slandering the Lower House, and was only released on bail after three requests to the prosecutor. He was detained a total of four days for making the statements.

Following his release, Dr. Fayad said his words had been misinterpreted, and in an interview with Al Ra'i Arabic daily newspaper, he denied the statements attributed to him.

"My intention was not to slander the Parliament," he

said. "What I actually said in the interview was that three-fourths of the deputies in the world are liars."

Dr. Fayad granted the interview to Al Sabeel last year in response to charges by Islamist Deputy Bassam Enmouh that the Zarqa Municipality had been extorting money from citizens and that he had bribed a reporter by giving him a kiosk in return for news coverage.

Dr. Fayad could not be reached for comment.

Spanish ambassador inspects agricultural project in Karak

KARAK (Petra) — Spanish Ambassador to Jordan, Eduardo Mirapex, Wednesday visited Karak and was briefed by Governor Badreddin Wadiat on the progress of an agricultural development project financed by the Spanish government.

The J2.8 million project, which is to be completed by the year 2000, will benefit an area of 10 villages that are home to 10,000 people within the Karak governorate.

The project, which entails developing agricultural lands adjacent to the Karak Wadi, aims at increasing land productivity and supplementing the villagers' income.

Large influx of Iranian tourists to visit Kingdom soon — Iranian official

AMMAN (Petra) — The visiting director of Iran's Tourism Board, Akbar Mohammadi Huseini, announced Wednesday that large groups of Iranian tourists will be coming to Jordan in the coming weeks.

The Iranian official was speaking at a meeting organised by the Jordan Travel Agents Association (JTAA) to discuss means of promoting tourism cooperation between Jordan and Iran.

Mr. Huseini reviewed his organisation's activities, noting that it owns and operates 25 hotels and conducts tourism projects, including a hotel training course, an airline, and a railway system that transports tourists around the country.

He said the tourism board supervises three kinds of trips to Jordan for Iranian tourists, visiting historic places, visiting religious sites and passing in transit through Jordan to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

He also noted that 20,000 Iranians have visited Jordan in the past four months and his country was planning to increase the number and help market Jordan as an Islamic tourist country.

Minister of Tourism and

Antiquities Akel Biltaji urged tourists and travel agents in Jordan to provide all the necessary facilities and organise trips for tourists to visit the religious and historic places in the Kingdom.

He noted that Jordan abounds with places that would be of interest to Iranian tourists, such as the tomb of Jafar Ben Abi Taleb, one of the companions of the Prophet Mohammad, the tomb of Shau'bi and other religious shrines.

According to the minister, tourism between Iran and Jordan is bound to increase, noting

in this regard that Royal Jordanian will organise chartered flights during the next two months between Amman and Tehran and will commence regular flights in June.

Mr. Biltaji briefed Mr. Huseini and the accompanying delegation on the work of the Royal Commission for the Restoration of Holy Shrines in Jordan.

Iranian Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Ali Subhani expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Mr. Biltaji and the Kingdom to promote relations between the two countries.

Irbid industrial city to expand facilities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC) has floated a tender to expand Al Hassan Industrial City in the Irbid governorate by developing 202 dunams of land, a move designed to accommodate 50 new projects and create an additional 3,000 jobs.

In an announcement Wednesday, JIEC Director General Anwar Majali said the expansion was necessitated by a growing demand by

investors for new factories within the industrial city.

Al Hassan Industrial City, currently comprising 55 industries with an estimated JD101 million capital, employs 2,300 workers, he said.

The existing industrial city is set up on 427 dunams, and all factories, which range from 100 to 2,600 square metres in size, are provided with integrated services, including electricity, water, and sewage

networks, according to Mr. Majali.

Nineteen of the city's industries are jointly owned by interests from Jordan, Arab countries and foreign nations, have an overall estimated capital of JD65 million, according to Mr. Majali.

Referring to the non-Jordanian owners, Mr. Majali said that include one Arab-Israeli, one British, one Syrian, one Palestinian, one Lebanese, one

Bulgarian, four Dutch, and seven Iraqis.

The industries produce foodstuffs, plastic and rubber products, electrical appliances, chemical products, textiles, furniture, kitchen utensils, pharmaceuticals and construction materials, he said.

The investors enjoy tax exemptions for two years from the start of production and are exempted from paying real estate taxes.

Jordan to send delegation to higher education conference in Beirut

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will take part in a regional conference on higher education that is slated to open Monday in Beirut with the participation of delegates from 14 Arab states, according to an announcement by the Ministry of Higher Education on Wednesday.

The meeting, which is sponsored by the regional office of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), will be part of preparations for the general UNESCO conference to be held in Paris on Sept. 28, according to the statement.

The meeting is scheduled to discuss topics connected with the adaptation of higher education to the needs of local communities, its role in social development, regional and international cooperation in higher education affairs, modernising education systems in the Arab region and improving the quality of higher education.

On the sidelines of the four-day conference two symposiums are to be held, one tackling modern information technology and modern communications in higher education and the second examining the role of women in higher education, according to the statement.

The conference will issue a report that will be considered as a regional declaration on higher education in the Arab region in the 21st century, as well as the conference's recommendations.

Apart from Jordan, whose delegation will be led by Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Handan, the following countries will be represented at the meetings: Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Iraq, Mauritania, Algeria, Oman, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait.

The director of the agricultural department in Karak, Khaled Nawaiseh, said the project also aims at preventing erosion of the lands on the sides of the wadi and includes a water system, the creation of pasture land, and drilling wells.

Work on the project began in 1995, according to Mr. Nawaiseh, who accompanied the ambassador on a tour of the project.

Japan extends grant for Petra project

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government of Japan has provided a \$91,351 grant to the Hashemite University to help finance the Petra Preservation Project, which aims at carrying out necessary surveying of environmental and cultural protection in Petra, according to a Japanese embassy press release.

An agreement to this effect was signed at the Japanese embassy Wednesday by Ambassador Koichi Matsumoto and Salim Sabri, acting university president.

The main objectives of the project are to collect surveying data for topographic maps and survey the structural features of some facades of monuments in Petra to document the damage resulting from weathering. This basic study needs to design a feasible plan for the development and protection of environment in the area, the statement added.

The grant to the university falls within the framework of the Japanese Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GAGP), but the Japanese government has been providing technical assistance to the university through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the announcement said.

Masaki Takakura, a member of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), has been

working for the Petra Preservation Project as a surveyor. He will conduct surveying for the project with new equipment donated by the Japanese government.

Two other Japanese volunteers from JICA are also assigned to the Hashemite University in the field of environment, and have given students lectures on environment engineering, the statement concluded.

what's going on

- DEPARTURES**
- Royal Jordanian Airline
 - 06:25 Amman to London
 - 07:25 Amman to Beirut
 - 11:00 Amman to Chicago
 - 11:30 Amman to Cairo
 - 11:45 Abu Dhabi to Amman
 - 12:05 Amman to London
 - 12:10 Amman to Beirut
 - 12:15 Amman to London
 - 12:20 Amman to Beirut
 - 19:35 Amman to London
 - 20:00 Amman to Beirut
 - 20:30 Amman to London
 - 23:00 Kuala Lumpur to Amman
- Other Flights**
- 06:35 Amman to London
 - 06:45 Amman to Beirut
 - 08:15 Amman to London
 - 08:30 Amman to Beirut
 - 11:20 Amman to London
 - 11:30 Amman to Beirut
 - 17:30 Amman to London
 - 21:30 Amman to Beirut
 - 21:50 Amman to London
- PLAY**
- Children's play "Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
- EXHIBITIONS**
- "The Spanish Contemporary Graphic Art" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
 - "New Makine in Deutschland" in English with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m.
 - "Rosewood" at the American Center, Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
 - Children's play "Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Growing number of universities raises questions on education and market needs

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's 21 universities have lured thousands of Arab students, slowly helping turn the Kingdom into a regional educational centre.

A quarter of the over 70,000 students currently enrolled at universities are from Arab countries, officials said.

But with Jordan's unemployment rate, officially put at 15 per cent and independently at between 22 and 27 per cent, many experts question whether these universities are being planned according to the needs of the local labour market.

"This is a weak point in Jordan's educational system, since current expectations students have from a university and high-school education is irrational," said Munther Masri, a former minister of education, in an interview with the Jordan Times.

He explained that demands were related to needs to fulfil social status rather than the actual need for such specialisations in Jordan.

"If employment cannot be provided, then it is left up to the judgement

of the parents. But all we can do is to keep parents and the public aware of the needs of the local market."

Earlier this week, the Council of Islamic Organisations and Societies in Jordan criticised the Ministry of Higher Education for consenting to the establishment of seven new private universities and urged the ministry to reconsider its decision.

In a memorandum sent to the ministry, the council said the great number of institutes of higher learning would turn out graduates only to join the army of unemployed.

According to official figures, Jordan has seven public and 14 private universities, many of which sprang up after the government began allowing the private sector to invest in the lucrative education business in the early 1990s.

"Up to the late 1980s, there were only four public universities, since the private sector was not allowed to invest," said Dr. Masri.

Another question many educationists are asking is how quality can be ensured.

"The procedures for accreditation start with an application," Dr. Masri explained. "The Ministry of Higher

Education has certain criteria which have to be fulfilled according to their specialisations," he added.

"If the applicant meets these standards, then the university is given accreditation. In most cases the applicants provide more than what is required," he said.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has often called on higher education institutions to become centres of research for the advancement and development of the country.

"Rather than reduce education to a mere acquisition of information, governments and educators should

promote education as a process aimed at stimulating thinking skills and critical approaches," Prince Hassan said.

Dr. Masri said ideas such as those promoted by Prince Hassan will only be realised "when you have a wide-scale postgraduate studies programme."

"This is one of the major aims of [the ministry's] higher education reform plan," Dr. Masri said.

"However, this needs qualified staff and financial backing, something that continues to pose dilemmas."

Security Council starts drafting resolution on Iraq-U.N. accord

(Continued from page 1)

Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq will retain over the inspections.

According to the official, Mr. Annan said the commission of the special group, established in the U.N.-Iraq agreement, would be a weapons expert chosen from UNSCOM, and that UNSCOM would play a major role in guiding its operations in Iraq.

But the U.N. chief also said he believed UNSCOM required some kind of political oversight and that he intended to appoint a personal political representative to Iraq, the U.S. official said.

U.N. sources told the daily they expected the job to go to Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister who accompanied Mr. Annan to Baghdad.

U.S. officials were asking exactly what role the political representative will play and have noted that Mr. Annan has not defined UNSCOM's duties within the new group, the daily said.

U.N. officials said Mr. Annan was facing some resentment among UNSCOM personnel for his sympathetic response to Iraqi complaints about the attitude of some U.N. inspectors. They said Mr. Annan, in the closed meeting with the council referred to some UNSCOM staff members as "cowboys" who sometimes behaved irresponsibly (see separate story).

In Baghdad, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz has denied that the U.S. military build-up in the Gulf forced Iraq to strike a deal with the United Nations on arms inspections.

"It wasn't the military deployment which pushed us to conclude an accord with the [U.N.] Secretary General" Kofi Annan, he said in an interview on Iraqi television late Tuesday.

"We were not intimidated. It had been the case, Iraqis would not have volunteered in their thousands for arms training and to defy American arrogance," said Mr. Aziz.

The deployment of the U.S. force in the Gulf has cost "well over \$600 million" since November when the showdown over U.N.

arms inspection in Iraq began, a Pentagon official said Wednesday.

"Just for the actions through today and mobilisation, [it] is well over \$600 million," Deputy Defence Secretary John Hamre told defence reporters here. "But that's just basically actions to date. It's going to be more than that."

U.S. forces in the Gulf have grown since November to nearly 34,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, more than 400 military aircraft and 20 warships including two aircraft carriers.

Although the crisis appears to have been eased by Iraq's agreement to open its presidential palaces to unfettered U.N. inspection, Washington has made clear it intends to keep the force in place for the foreseeable future.

How much extra funding the Pentagon will seek to cover the costs depends on the outcome of policy discussions now underway, Mr. Hamre said.

"Are we going to base this force in the region for the rest of the fiscal year? Are we going to mobilise some for 120 days or are we going to cut it short?"

"There are big policy issues that are under discussion right now that are really going to determine that, and I don't know the answers to that yet," he said.

Mr. Hamre's cost estimate is over what the Pentagon would normally spend to operate the ships, aircraft and units deployed.

Education has certain criteria which have to be fulfilled according to their specialisations," he added.

"If the applicant meets these standards, then the university is given accreditation. In most cases the applicants provide more than what is required," he said.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has often called on higher education institutions to become centres of research for the advancement and development of the country.

"Rather than reduce education to a mere acquisition of information, governments and educators should

U.N.: Weapons inspectors need to be more sensitive

(Continued from page 1)

a club, there's no outlet for frustration, people drink too much, it's son of understandable," he said. "They are a relatively young group of people bored to death."

He said that when he got complaints about his own humanitarian staff, he tried to get people to understand local sensitivities but always warned them: "Screw up again and you're out."

Other U.N. agencies in Iraq now use unmarked white cars which no longer bear the U.N. logo, but UNSCOM still drive around in vehicles which display their logo prominently.

"I was criticised by UNSCOM for taking it off the vehicles," Mr. Halliday said. "But there are too many of us here, it's like a provocation. They [the Iraqis] don't need to be reminded at every corner that we have got them

by the short hairs."

Mr. Halliday's comments were echoed by diplomats here. "UNSCOM ought to do some house-keeping in terms of the behaviour of its inspectors," said one diplomat.

"I find the unruly behaviour of some of the Chilean pilots offensive, so I don't know what the Iraqis make of it," UNSCOM spokesman Alan Dacey said he considered it inappropriate to comment before the commission's embattled executive chairman Richard Butler had spoken on the issue.

But one U.N. weapons inspector who declined to be named rejected the criticism of his colleagues.

"We have very important work to do here and we have been working longer hours than ever throughout the crisis making as many as 11 inspections a day," he said.

Castro dismisses prospect of transition in Cuba

HAVANA (AFP) — Cuban President Fidel Castro, reallocated to another five-year term by the National Assembly, firmly ruled out any political change of the kind recommended by the pope a month ago.

In a marathon speech lasting seven and a quarter hours — the longest of his political career — Mr. Castro Tuesday dismissed the prospect of a Cuban transition away from communism.

"Our opponents talk of a transition... from socialism to capitalism. We must let them know clearly: There will be no transition of that type in this country," the 71-year-old "Maximum Leader" said.

Mr. Castro also urged Washington to follow the advice of those who say the 36-year-old U.S. economic embargo against Cuba should be lifted in a bid to weaken its Communist system.

"We accept this challenge," Mr. Castro said. "Let them (the Americans) come. We will treat them extremely well. We are not afraid of new challenges."

Mr. Castro said Cuba would gladly do business

with the United States after the embargo was lifted.

The 601-seat National Assembly confirmed Mr. Castro as president of the council of state and president of the council of ministers until 2003. He has held both posts since they were created in 1976.

Mr. Castro had been confirmed as first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party in October.

Standing next to his 65-year-old brother, first vice president and likely successor Raul, Mr. Castro promised to steer Cuba into the third millennium under the slogan "socialism or death."

At the close of Pope John Paul II's first-ever visit to Cuba Jan. 21-25, and despite the pope's prayers for a change in Cuba, Mr. Castro vowed to remain "unshakeable in his principles."

At the pope's urgings, Mr. Castro freed some 300 political and common law prisoners, but Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina quickly cautioned that the release was not to be taken as a sign that dissension would be tolerated.

And despite an appeal

Monday from the European Union, four of the most prominent dissidents — including Vladimiro Roca, whose father Blas Roca was one of the founders of the Cuban Communist Party — will not be released, Attorney General Juan Escalona announced Tuesday.

But observers agree that there have never been so many indications that Cuba is undergoing the "peaceful and gradual" change called for by the pope.

Flushed with electoral victory and bolstered by the pope's visit and the diplomatic openings it has led to, Mr. Castro seems disposed to instill some change in his country without appearing to give in to outside pressure.

Despite with his numerous public appearances and marathon speeches, however, Mr. Castro has not managed to totally dispel rumours that his health is failing.

The National Assembly generally meets twice a year for one day.

There were some changes on the Council of State, but no change of policy, said its vice president, Carlos Lage

Davila. "The political line is the same," Mr. Lage told reporters, adding that the panel's focus was "fundamentally economic."

Mr. Lage is the architect of the economic recovery that Cuba has made since a severe depression caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, its chief sponsor.

Remarks by Mr. Lage suggest that Cuba's moves towards a market economy are likely to be expanded — or at least consolidated.

Cuba is currently divided between those who work for pesos and can afford only to buy the extremely limited rationed foods and people who work for dollars who can afford a wider variety of much higher priced items.

Fourteen of the council's 31 members were replaced in what Cuban officials said was an attempt to give the panel more balance. Those removed include Mr. Robaina and Culture Minister Abel Prieto, along with other cabinet ministers.

The panel also confirmed Ricardo Alarcon as the national assembly president for another five year term.



Cuban President Fidel Castro listens to the opening speech of the first session of the Cuban National Assembly next to his brother Cuba's Minister of the Armed Forces Raul Castro. The assembly will elect the presidency and secretariat of the highest legislative body in the country (Reuters photo)

Southern Afghanistan hit by heavy flooding

KABUL (AFP) — Thousands of people have been made homeless and a massive agricultural area badly hit by heavy flooding in southern Afghanistan, aid workers told AFP Wednesday.

In over a week of heavy rains washing out fields and orchards, aid workers say relief workers are now in the area but added fears remain of long term food and sanitation problems.

"Hundreds of families have been affected by the flooding and a thorough investigation is still in progress," said Ilkka Pirinen of the International Red Cross Federation.

He said Red Cross and Red Crescent teams were in the area distributing tents, plastic sheeting and blankets to the victims and had so far reported a figure of 2,800 made homeless by the disaster.

However aid workers say there have been no reports of any deaths from the flooding.

"Of course it is most inconvenient because we have just had an earthquake, but it was expected and we were prepared because flooding happens every spring and autumn," Mr. Pirinen added.

A United Nations official said the areas hit are in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, an area of high agricultural output and frequently hit by heavy spring rains.

"According to preliminary surveys the areas affected include Argandab, Kandahar city, Panjarray, Maywand, Gurishk and Lashkargah," explained Sarah Russell, a Pakistan-based U.N. spokesperson.

She said the area hit — situated around 500 kilometres south west of Kabul — could be beset by massive problems this year due to loss of livestock and crops.

"What the U.N. is concerned about is the period after the floods subside with longer term food and water supply needs," Ms. Russell added.

The area of Kandahar and the Helmand valley — a centre of power for the Taliban militia — is also renowned for its huge annual harvest of opium poppy, a crop which provides most of the heroin consumed in Europe.

The flooding comes less than a month after a major quake rocked north eastern Afghanistan, killing up to 4,500 people and injuring thousands of others.

Some candidates too fat to be Philippines president: Ramos

MANILA (AFP) — Some candidates in this year's Philippine presidential election are too fat for the job and should work off the fat, President Fidel Ramos said Wednesday.

"Certainly by looking at some of our presidential candidates, it is obvious that some would need a little trimming down," he told a news conference.

"This is a punishing job, backbreaking," said Mr. Ramos, whose six-year term ends on June 30.

"In fairness to our people the next one should be able to last six years."

The Philippines will elect the next president on May 11.

The comments were interpreted here as a none too subtle dig at Vice President Joseph Estrada, who leads the main opposition ticket as well as the popularity surveys.

The overweight Mr. Estrada, who has admitted to being a heavy drinker earlier in his political career, has publicly denied rumours that he is suffering from cirrhosis of the liver. He insists his only health problem is gout.

Mr. Ramos refused to be drawn on the liver issue on Mr. Estrada.

Jose de Venecia, the candidate supported by Mr. Ramos is none too slim himself. But the president insisted that his man "shoots almost as good a game of golf as I do," and that he is a good swimmer.

Mr. Ramos, 70 next month, said the next president "must be as fit as almost as Gerry Penabazola," a world champion Filipino boxer.

Mr. Ramos, who underwent surgery for a blocked carotid artery in December 1996, underwent a twice-yearly medical checkup here Tuesday. His doctor said Wednesday that the results were "all within normal."

He said Mr. de Venecia is to undertake a medical checkup next week.

Asked about the mental fitness of a presidential candidate, Mr. Ramos said this "more difficult to determine."

The Commission on Elections is conducting hearings aimed at disqualifying about 70 marginal presidential candidates.

Among those who must prove their fitness to the commission is a man who claims to be the father of Jesus Christ and another who says he will base government policies on the horoscope.

Fresh Sri Lanka fight kills 53 combatants

COLOMBO (AFP) — At least 30 Tamil rebels and 23 soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand fighting in northern Sri Lanka where the air force kept up bombing raids, the defence ministry said Wednesday.

It said heavily armed troops confronted a large group of guerrillas from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) near the village of Olumadam east of Mankulam Tuesday.

"Terrorists retaliated and the battle lasted for a few hours at close quarters," the ministry said. It said the military suffered 30 wounded.

The LTTE's clandestine Voice of Tigers radio put military losses at 50 dead and said only six of their own fighters died.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said the LTTE gave them the remains of 16 soldiers to be passed on to the authorities in the northern town of Vavuniya. The 16 were included in the military toll of 23, officials said.

The rebel radio said their fighters had the bodies of 20 soldiers and had cremated several disfigured corpses. It was not clear why the other four bodies had not been handed over. The Tigers said air force jets bombed their positions for six hours.

Defence officials said Tuesday they had pounded suspected rebel positions near Mankulam after Monday's sinking by the Tigers of two navy ships off the northern peninsula of Jaffna. Some 36 soldiers or sailors were killed or missing.

Residents in the northern town of Vavuniya, 254 kilometres north of Colombo, said they heard a barrage of long-range fire further north Tuesday.

but there was no shelling Wednesday.

The retaliatory military strikes came amid a navy search off Jaffna after LTTE suicide bombers in small boats hit a convoy taking troops to Jaffna.

The navy initially rescued 62 soldiers and sailors from the two vessels, the Pabbatha and the Vaalampurai, but one man died in hospital. Eight bodies were found in the sea.

Navy sources said another nine sailors who survived the suicide attack were rescued by fishermen from neighbouring India and had been taken to the south Indian town of Nagapattinam. Two soldiers swam to the Jaffna coast.

According to latest military figures 27 sailors and soldiers are still missing. Hopes of finding them alive were dim, officials said.

The LTTE said Tuesday on its clandestine radio that 11 suicide cadres of its Black Sea Tiger unit were killed in the naval attack.

While the military has control of Jaffna, the main land access to the region is still held by the rebels, forcing the authorities to use expensive and dangerous sea and air routes to supply the peninsula.

Troops have been mounting a major offensive to capture the land route to Jaffna since last May but still have some way to go.

The Tigers have been waging a protracted campaign for an independent homeland in the north and east, where the two-million strong Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 55,000 people have been killed over the past 25 years.

Montenegrin president slams Belgrade over Kosovo issue

PODGORICA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic has slammed Belgrade's policy towards the southern Serbian province of Kosovo, and called for greater autonomy for its Albanian-majority population.

Criticising Belgrade for using "police pressure" to counter growing unrest in the province, Mr. Djukanovic said in a television interview late Tuesday that Yugoslavia could not be welcomed back into the international fold "without opening a dialogue in Kosovo."

Trouble first started in Kosovo, where 90 per cent of the population is ethnic Albanian, when Serb leaders in Belgrade revoked the province's autonomy in 1989, sparking street protests and the birth of a passive resistance movement.

U.S. envoy for the

Balkans Robert Gelbard said recently that a resolution of the Kosovo issue was "crucial to the lifting of the last of the U.N. sanctions imposed on federal Yugoslavia, comprising Serbia and Montenegro, for its role in the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict."

Mr. Djukanovic said federal government plans for Yugoslavia's reintegration in the international community must give a "central position" to the Kosovo problem, and promote the "democratic emancipation" of the province.

So far this year three Serbs, including a policeman, and six Albanians have been killed in shootouts and ambushes in Kosovo, amid fears that the conflict will spread to other parts of the Balkans.

Runaway truck in S. Africa causes havoc, injures 25

PRETORIA (AFP) — Twenty-five people were injured, nine seriously, when a runaway truck ploughed into 27 vehicles in rush-hour morning traffic in downtown Pretoria Wednesday, police said.

One woman was in a critical condition in hospital after the 20-tonne truck came to a stop on top of her car.

The truck, carrying roof sheeting, slowed off of control when its brakes failed in the city's busy

Potgieter Street shortly after 7:00 a.m. (0500 GMT).

Four of the injured had to be cut from the wreckage of their vehicles.

Trees, glass and car wreckage littered an 800-metre stretch of road, which was closed to traffic for several hours.

The truck driver, who was apparently not injured, was arrested at the scene. Police said he would be charged with reckless and negligent driving.



Swedish Major Marten Molgard (centre) is escorted by an unidentified U.N. official (right) and a Georgian army soldier after his release early morning Feb. 25. Georgian gunmen freed another of their United Nations hostages on Wednesday and the national police commander predicted the six-day siege would be soon over (Reuters photo)

'Georgian gunmen could free remaining U.N. hostages soon'

GENEVA (AFP) — Two U.N. military observers held by an armed group in Georgia will be freed in two or three days, according to an exiled leader from the region who said Wednesday he had spoken by telephone with the Georgian security minister.

Tamaz Nadareishvili, the exiled speaker of the parliament of the autonomous region of Abkhazia, spoke as Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze met with supporters of former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in a bid to win the hostages' release.

He also said that according to the minister, perpetrators of an assassination attempt against Mr. Shevardnadze on Feb. 9 would be arrested "in the near future."

There will be statement of the Georgian govern-

ment very soon," on this, he said. Gunmen last Thursday abducted four U.N. military observers but have since released two — one of Sunday and another overnight Tuesday. They are also holding six Georgian civilians in the remote village of Jikhshkari.

Some of the gunmen told reporters Wednesday that they would release a third U.N. military observer, a Uruguayan.

According to a high-level diplomat in Moscow, the Uruguayan had gone with the head of the kidnapping gang to negotiate surrender terms for the gunmen.

Mr. Nadareishvili was in Geneva to press his claim for Georgia's territorial integrity with a special status for Abkhazia.

Abkhazia, a sub-tropical region on the Black Sea coast of northwest

Georgia, declared independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and drove out Georgian troops in a 1992-1993 war. Up to 20,000 people died in the conflict.

A ceasefire has been in effect since May 1994 and 1,600 Russian peacekeeping troops remain deployed on the border with Georgia.

Mr. Nadareishvili, who is pro-Georgian, said the conflict had been "provoked by a third force, and that force is Russia." Abkhazia had been the "theatre of genocide and ethnic cleansing," he said.

The Abkhaz official said Mr. Shevardnadze's backing for a pipeline to transport oil from Azerbaijan through Georgia and not Russian territory was one reason for two murder attempts against him.

Ban on Freetown airport lifted

FREETOWN (AFP) — A ban on commercial flights was lifted here Wednesday, nine months to the day after a now-toppled junta seized power, prompting a variety of sanctions, including air travel restrictions.

ECOMOG, the Nigerian-led intervention force which chased the army regime from Freetown ear-

lier this month, said in a statement commercial flights could now fly in and out of Freetown between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (0700 to 1900 GMT).

Airlines wishing to use Freetown airport outside these hours are required to give 24 hours notice to ECOMOG.

Before the coup, two European carriers, the

Dutch KLM and the Belgian Sabena, as well as Lebanon's Middle East Airlines and several African airlines, had scheduled flights to Freetown.

The last commercial aircraft to use the airport were employed to evacuate expatriates fleeing the violence and looting of the May 25 coup.

Burundi military frees former president

BUJUMBURA (AFP) — The Burundian military Wednesday announced the release of former President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, saying it did not have the authority to judge him and others accused of plotting to overthrow strongman Pierre Buyoya.

The war council, a military court established by Major Buyoya, a Tutsi who seized power for the second time in a bloodless coup in July 1996, opened the so-called "Bagaza file" last Friday, but the council's competence was immediately challenged by the defence.

Mr. Bagaza, a hard-line Tutsi whom Mr. Buyoya overthrew in 1987, has been under house arrest since February 1997.

He refused to appear at the initial hearing, because, a source close to him told AFP, "as a former head of state, it is his right to be tried only by the supreme court."

That position was backed by Mr. Bagaza's lawyers.

Eight other people, including soldiers and a senior magistrate, were accused of plotting with Mr. Bagaza to overthrow Mr. Buyoya, who ruled after overthrowing Mr. Bagaza until 1993, when he stepped down after losing an election to Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu.

Ndadaye's assassination by Tutsi soldiers in a coup attempt in October 1993 sparked a civil war between Hutu guerrillas and the Tutsi-dominated army.

Relations between Mr. Buyoya and Mr. Bagaza have long been strained, particularly since Mr. Bagaza's Party for National Recovery (PARENA) disapproves of any measures by Buyoya to negotiate with the rebels in the escalating civil war, which has cost an estimated 200,000 lives.

Hutu extremists, for their part, oppose any talks on power-sharing with Tutsis.

PARENA denies that there was any plot to kill Mr. Buyoya.

Regional heads of state who met in Kampala last Saturday decided to continue sanctions imposed a week after Mr. Buyoya's 1996 coup in a bid to force him to negotiate with the rebels.

They repeated a demand made at a summit in Dar es Salaam last September for the release of Mr. Bagaza, as well as Sylvester Nibantunganya, the Hutu President Buyoya overthrew in 1996, and the former speaker of the national assembly.

Leonice Ngendakumana, a Hutu who is accused of participation in genocide.

as a "political patriarch" independent of lobby groups, who would be seen by many voters as a guarantor of stability.

"Above all, people don't want any upheavals. It's a survival instinct which, along with the desire to live in a predictable country, gives Mr. Yeltsin a great chance with the voters," Mr. Nemtsov said.

Last month Mr. Yeltsin said he had decided who should succeed him as Russian head of state while refusing to name his favoured candidate. But Mr. Yeltsin's aides have not ruled out that he may seek a third term, arguing that his first period in

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin will launch a weekly television programme which will give viewers the opportunity to phone in and question him, his press service said Wednesday. Starting next week, the programme will be aired live on the Russian state television channel RTR. Details, including the day of broadcast, have not yet been determined, a spokesman said.

Kremlin sources cited by the daily *Russky Telegraph* said that Russian President Boris Yeltsin had instructed Mr. Chernomyrdin, 59, to carry out the telecast in order to "show the openness of the Russian leadership and its concern for the public."

Mr. Yeltsin, 67, gives a regular radio address, but it is usually pre-recorded and there is no provision for listeners to phone in.

Many political analysts expect that Mr. Chernomyrdin, prime minister since December 1992, will be a candidate to succeed Mr. Yeltsin in presidential elections in 2000.

Influential businessman Boris Berezovsky said in an interview published Tuesday that Mr. Chernomyrdin would be the most likely candidate to keep economic reforms on track and prevent serious splits.

The president, Mr. Nemtsov said, adding that such factors "incline me to think the president has a great chance."

So far only the nationalist retired General Alexander Lebed and liberal Yabloko leader Grigory Yavlinsky have announced they will run for the presidency in 2000, but Communist Party chief Gennady Zyuganov, the runner-up in 1996, is also expected to be a candidate again.

Other potential candidates include Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and Mr. Nemtsov himself.

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No use for casus belli

DESPITE THE initial euphoria over the agreement that U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has struck with the Iraqi government in Baghdad a few days ago, there is enough grumbling from Washington and London to cast a pall over the future of Baghdad deal. Having grudgingly accepted the accord, the U.S. and the U.K. now appear busy trying to punch holes in its text. The fact that the Clinton administration continues to send warplanes and soldiers to the Gulf suggests that the crisis is far from over or at least it could erupt again, while the U.S.-led armada is still in the region.

There may be other reasons why the international community and U.N. diplomacy cannot claim total victory yet.

It is likely that U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair were betting on the failure of Annan's mission and may now feel that the agreement has effectively pulled the rug from under their feet. On the other hand, the huge cost of the military build-up, coupled with the perceived need by the two Western powers to maintain preparedness in the Gulf, have somewhat to be justified. Besides, Saddam Hussein cannot be trusted, as some would no doubt argue, and he may still renege on the agreement that his Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz has signed.

The U.N. secretary general emerged from the post-agreement encounter with the Security Council feeling that there was a "general sense" of approval for what he accomplished in Baghdad. This obviously means that the U.S. and U.K. ambassadors to the council had expressed only lukewarm and conditional support for the breakthrough. For their part, American congressmen from both the left and the right have already felt that their country was cheated out of a golden opportunity to get rid of the Iraqi president once and for all.

The Security Council has yet to adopt a resolution incorporating the main features of the U.N.-Iraq deal and the U.S. ambassador to the council, Bill Richardson, is poised to ask many questions of drafting and substantive nature. We can therefore look for an acrimonious debate in the council in the days ahead with members split along the old traditional lines.

This is where and when the Iraqi government has to be most careful and wise. The agreement best serves their country's needs. They have to uphold and implement it to the letter, whatever that costs. The last thing Iraq needs presently or at any time in the future is to provide the Americans with the casus belli that they had sought but could not find.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi said the most prominent outcome of the U.N.-Iraq deal was perhaps the rehabilitation of the world organisation as the real authority in settling international disputes. France, China and Russia played an instrumental role in achieving a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis, and at the same time, these countries saved the Arab region, particularly Iraq further sufferings and destruction. Rintawi said. The writer said that it was perhaps not only the three countries' efforts that helped put matters back in their right perspective but also the unified stand of the Arab countries against the use of force helped the U.N. to reach this result. The world community has now witnessed that the U.S.'s unilateral handling of world issues is certain to meet with failure and therefore the Arabs along with the members of the Security Council ought to bring to the fore once again the need for the U.N. to involve itself again in bringing an end to the Arab Israeli conflict, which the U.S. has so far failed to resolve, said the writer. He said that not only the U.S. has interests in the Middle East but so do Russia, China, France and other nations, and these interests must be protected. According to Rintawi, these countries should lead the world community towards finding a permanent solution to this long standing issue.

Al Ra'i's Ibrahim Absi said now that Iraq has responded in writing to the world community's demands and accepted the full implementation of all the U.N. resolutions, the world organisation should turn its attention to other outstanding issues. The world community, and the U.S. in particular, resorted to diplomatic and military pressure on Iraq to force it to comply with the Security Council resolutions, and Iraq has agreed to comply despite seven long years of siege and sanctions, Absi said. He said the time has come for the U.S., Britain and the other members of the Security Council to pressure Israel into complying with the U.N. resolutions concerning Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories in Lebanon and Syria. The world community has been watching Israel continually defying the U.N. resolutions and realises that nothing has been done to end its occupation of Arab territories, noted the writer. Presently the Israelis are defying even the U.S. by refusing to implement the Oslo accords as concluded with the Palestinians and it refuses to withdraw from the Palestinian territories in accordance with those accords, added the writer. He said if the U.S. and Britain have the right to demand that Iraq comply with the U.N. resolutions, they also have the right and the responsibility to demand that Israel implement U.N. resolutions. Absi said the world is now demanding that the U.N. not practice a double standard policy with regard to issues that threaten world peace.

View from Academia

Cooperation, partnership to set a new Arab order

NOW THAT the U.S./UN-Iraqi crisis has, thank God, been finally defused (at least momentarily), time is ripe for some serious thinking, and rethinking, about the shape of things to come, for the Middle East region and the Arab World as a whole, in relation to the emerging new global order itself. The best premise (and most workable and even inevitable), in my humble opinion, on which such thinking and rethinking ought to be based when we talk about the evolution or transformation of Arab-Arab relations is perhaps, as aptly and perceptively suggested by His Majesty King Hussein in his important interview with Orbit broadcast over Jordan Television Tuesday night, is (simply) partnership.

It has become increasingly obvious over the years (and more so now than at any other previous time) that no real, positive change in the lot of the region is possible (be it change at the micro/macro political, social or economic level) without the sincere, active, conscientious and concerted efforts of the peoples and governments of the Middle East region and the Arab World themselves.

Even though this seems such a basic, fundamental, and axiomatic principle, it is often (as indeed the case is now) overlooked by many in our part of the world. Frankly, the Arab Nation has been, generally, doing very little justice to itself, sinning or standing essentially arms-tied as crucial, destiny-shaping events and developments unfold. Come to think of it, we have not been relying on ourselves much, and we have not been doing enough to transform ourselves into what we want. If you cut out the lip-service, the emotional rhetoric, the poetry, the day-dreaming, the idealism, the preaching, the intentions, the plans, and the ink on paper (and the little good that has come out either sporadically or partially), you will find that we have not done much (in a concrete, tangible and reasonable way) to improve and better our world. We have been more passive (much more) than active, more recipient (much more) than participant, and more reliant on others than on ourselves.

It seems to me that we in the Arab World cannot even begin to hope to move in the direction of our objectives,

aims, aspirations and dreams unless and until we get rid of the numerous myths to which many among us subscribe so adamantly and desperately and unto which we displace much of our faults and failings, and until and unless we become realistic.

Among the myths which have done much harm are: a) that we are helpless and weak, b) that we are always subject to conspiracies by vicious world forces whose sole aim in life is to make us fail in everything, and c) that we are one nation, holy, pure and coherent in everything we say and do. These myths and many others — entrenched in our informal daily discourse, in our newspaper articles and television shows, in our sermons and speeches, in our "scholarly" articles and books, in our psyche and in our minds — are constantly working their nasty effects on us, crippling our progress, and causing our failure so far to be what we want to be.

We are not what we think we are, and the first thing for us to do is to reject and bury these myths which have turned us either into dreamers and romantics or into paranoid victims. Once we reject such myths, we have to find a formula (other than so-called Arab unity with which we sweet-talk ourselves) that allows Arab countries (peoples and governments, but mainly governments) to function both individually and collectively. You see, you cannot melt individual differences among Arab countries (politically, socially, economically, geographically, demographically, etc.): in fact, why melt them when they could be healthy and when they could be a real asset? And we need a formula which enables Arab governments (and peoples through democratic institutions) to exchange ideas, draw up plans, and implement projects which benefit both each and all — ideas that can work (not dreams and poetry), aims that are realistic, projects that can be implemented, plans that are concrete, and strategies that are effective.

The formula, in my opinion, lies in simple-down-to-earth coordination. Arab unity is nice; we love it, and we cherish it as an idea and an ideal (and it makes us feel good). But at this point, it seems impossible to implement. Let's begin at the humbler, more realistic, and

more workable formula of coordination.

We know, of course, that coordination is not easy among people who are not used to it in their family, school, neighbourhood, and institutional life. In a culture in which teamwork, committee-work is difficult to conduct, coordination is difficult to achieve. But coordination is not far-fetched, unrealistic, and impossible to accomplish under the circumstances. In the short-term, it should be made our objective, because through coordination, and coordination only, can the Arab World function and build whatever future destiny it will forge for itself.

Coordination is desirable, not only because it does not melt what should not be melted, but it also does not threaten or scare off any individual Arab government, country, majority or minority group, or any other essential element in what we refer to nobly as the Arab Nation or the Arab World.

But coordination also implies the concept we spoke of at the beginning of this article: partnership. This is an important concept indeed. In the world of education, everybody is talking about it today; in the world of business and industries, everybody is also talking about it; in the more developed (and experienced) part of the globe, everybody is talking about partnership. Arab countries need to try it; let's view ourselves as partners, in addition to brothers and sisters, etc.

The Jordanian leadership, whose commitment to the overall welfare of the Arab Nation and to the respect of each and every component of it is well-known, can play an important role in this respect. It can in fact be not only the initiator of efforts and contacts to this effect (through bilateral, tri-lateral, multilateral meetings with other Arab brothers — or shall we say from now on partners — or through an upcoming Arab summit, etc.), but also, more importantly, the catalyst which can bring coordination about.

We need a new Arab order soon, one based on coordination and partnership, instead of (or in addition to, if you will) the poetry and the patriotic rhetoric. We have tried the latter for a long time; let's try the former.

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

The Palestinian state exists

By John V. Whitbeck

THERE HAS long been a strange, other-worldly quality to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pronouncements on the subject of Palestinian statehood. He pledged to his Likud Party's congress in September 1996 that "you can dream every night and you will still wake up every morning and see: There is no Palestinian state, there is no Palestinian state; there is not and there will not be a Palestinian state." In March 1997, he insisted that "the most the Palestinians will get within the frame of the peace process is a limited autonomy," which, logically and legally, would require Israeli annexation of the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip. Indeed, in December 1997, he even declared that the West Bank is "part of Israel proper."

In fact, whether or not Mr. Netanyahu likes it, the State of Palestine already exists, and Palestinian statehood is not even an issue in the "permanent status" negotiations which, according to the Declaration of Principles signed in September 1993, must reach an agreement not later than May 1999.

According to the Declaration of Principles, the issues to be covered during "permanent status" negotiations are "Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and co-operation with other neighbours, and other issues of common interest." Palestinian statehood is not mentioned, but the references to "borders" and "other neighbours" would make no sense except in the context of an agreement between states. Israel's eventual formal acceptance of Palestinian statehood is clearly implicit in the terms of the Declaration of Principles, but, as a matter of international law, Israel's prior acceptance is not an essential pre-condition for the state of Palestine to exist.

While extending diplomatic recognition to foreign states lies within the discretion of each sovereign state, there are four customary criteria for sovereign statehood: a defined territory over which sovereignty is not seriously contested by any other state; a permanent population; the ability and willingness of the state to discharge international and treaty obligations; and effective control over the state's territory and population.

While Israel has never defined its ultimate borders, the state of Palestine has effectively done so. They encompass only that portion of historical Palestine occupied by Israel during the 1967 war. Sovereignty over expanded East Jerusalem is explicitly contested, even though, after three decades, none of the world's other 192 sovereign states has recognised Israel's claim to sovereignty. However, the sovereignty of the state of Palestine over the Gaza Strip and the rest of the West Bank is uncontested.

Israel has never dared even to

purport to annex these territories, presumably recognising that doing so would raise awkward questions about the rights (or lack of them) of those who live there. Jordan renounced all claims to the West Bank in favour of the Palestinians in July 1988. Although Egypt administered the Gaza Strip for 19 years, it never asserted sovereignty over it. Since November 1988, when Palestinian independence and statehood were formally proclaimed, the only state asserting

The weak link in Palestine's claim to already exist as a state was, until recently, . . . "effective control."

sovereignty over those portions of historical Palestine which Israel conquered in 1967 (aside from expanded East Jerusalem) has been the state of Palestine, a state recognised as such by 124 other states encompassing the vast majority of mankind. The permanence of Palestine's population is not in question. The state's ability and willingness to discharge international and treaty obligations has been demonstrated by its establishment of diplomatic relations with a majority of the world's other sovereign states and by its membership in various international organisations in which the United States was out in a position to block its membership.

. . . serious "permanent status" negotiations cannot even begin while there is any uncertainty as to whether the negotiators are seeking agreement on the details of the future relationship between two states or whether one of those states still hopes to annex the other.

The weak link in Palestine's claim to already exist as a state was, until recently, the fourth criterion, "effective control." When the state was proclaimed, its entire territory was under the military occupation of another sovereign state. Now, however, a Palestinian executive and legislature, democ-

atically elected with the enthusiastic approval of the international community, Palestinian ministries and courts and substantial Palestinian security forces exercise "effective control" over a portion of Palestinian territory in which the great majority of the state's population lives. Even the United States and European countries which have not yet extended formal diplomatic recognition to the state of Palestine welcome President Arafat with the honours and protocol due to a head of state. It can no longer be seriously argued that Palestine's claim to exist falls at the fourth and final hurdle.

Accordingly, as a matter of customary international law, if not yet of general public consciousness, the status of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 is today clear and (with the exception of expanded East Jerusalem) uncontested. The state of Palestine is sovereign, the state of Israel remains the occupying power in a portion of Palestinian territory and U.N. Security Council resolution 242, explicitly premised on the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and explicitly cited as the basis of the future "permanent status" settlement in all the Israeli-Palestinian accords, is the internationally accepted basis for terminating the occupation.

Although drawing a veil labelled "Palestinian Authority" across the face of the state may once have been necessary or helpful to the advancement of peace, this is clearly no longer the case. It is no longer necessary, since polls have repeatedly shown that a majority of Israelis are now ready to accept a Palestinian state, and it has become profoundly unhelpful, since, as a purely practical matter, serious "permanent status" negotiations cannot even begin while there is any uncertainty as to whether the negotiators are seeking agreement on the details of the future relationship between two states or whether one of those states still hopes to annex the other.

It was possible, though difficult, to achieve "interim status" agreements without even discussing the fundamental nature of the ultimate destination. It is impossible to make any meaningful progress towards a "permanent status" agreement without a prior common understanding of the fundamental nature of the ultimate destination.

Palestinian statehood is not within Israel's power to grant or deny. The Palestinian state exists. Only once this most fundamental "fact on the ground" is absorbed by Israeli — and American — public consciousness will it be possible for meaningful "permanent status" negotiations to begin and for both peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians to be achieved.

The writer is an international lawyer based in London. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

LETTERS

Abkhazians call it aggression

To the editor:

I HOPE you allow me to make some points about Gwynne Dyer's article, "Caucasian cauldron" (Jordan Times Feb. 23). Please allow me to correct a statement which was included in the article which stated that Georgia has fought a civil war and it has lost part of its territory to a rebel Muslim ethnic minority (The Abkhaz). It should rather be that Georgia under the leadership of Edward Shevardnadze invaded and fought a war of aggression against neighbouring Abkhaz. Historically Abkhazia after being recognised as an autonomous republic within the late Soviet Union was reduced in 1923 to a mere republic within Georgian territory upon the order from the central committee headed by Josef Stalin and his fellow countryman, the notorious Levant Beria. Both incidentally were ethnic Georgians. The Abkhaz sought the assistance of their (ethnically-related) neighbouring republics, with the help of the confederation of north Caucasian people they were able to liberate and expel the Georgian forces in a blitzkrieg offensive that lasted several days on Sukhumi, the regional capital. No Russian forces participated in that offensive. Alternatively a Russian blockade was enforced on Abkhazia ever since.

Feridon Jaimoukha
Amman

Opening up to debate

To the editor:

BEFORE I begin, I have to admit that it took me more than four months before I decided to write this letter, that's because I had the misconception that if a person who writes or argues publicly about a situation or phenomena in his/her society, he/she will immediately be labelled left or right wing. There was also the fear that most Arabs have about making their opinions public and their concern for their political or social standing in the society. As the Arabic saying goes, the window that brings wind in, close it and make yourself comfortable.

But I then realised that if a person does not speak out about his/her opinions, he/she is even in worse shape than being labelled. When a person argues a point (in a positive, constructive manner) he/she really cares strongly about it and opens that opinion to public discussion and debate.

Here then, (in my opinion) is my constructive argument. There are many prejudices some citizens of this country have towards other citizens because of their different origins. It is my opinion that this is one of the most important and yet least discussed subjects in the country today. The way I see it, origin makes no difference, we live in this country as Jordanian citizens, and human beings are all the same no matter where they come from, even religion has taught us that. So let's live in harmony and respect — like it or not we need each other.

Tareq O. Bdeir
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and city and country of residence. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Royal Jordanian clinches two deals

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Royal Jordanian (RJ) will operate direct flights from Baghdad to Saudi Arabia in April to carry Iraqi pilgrims after the national carrier got U.N. authorization, officials said Wednesday.

"The U.N. Sanctions Committee has approved a Jordanian request to allow Royal Jordanian to operate direct flights from Baghdad to Mecca during the Muslim Hajj season which starts first week of April,"

one official said. However, he and others refused to give details on how many flights RJ would operate and the number of passengers they are expected to carry.

Under U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq over its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, flights are barred to and from Iraq — except if they get U.N. approval.

RJ submitted the request to the Sanctions Committee last month.

Iraq, in defiance of U.N., sent a plane loaded with pilgrims to Mecca last year.

Saudi authorities allowed it to land.

In a separate development, an RJ spokesman said the national flag carrier will operate 20 chartered flights from Tehran to Amman to carry Iranian tourists seeking to visit Shi'ite holy sites and shrines in the Kingdom.

Majdi Sabri, RJ vice president for commercial affairs, told the Jordan Times an agreement was signed with an Iranian travel agent to organize the transport that will start from March 15 until May 20.

RJ will have to take landing rights from the Iranian Civil Aviation before it can launch the charter service.

Jordan and Iran severed air links in the early 1980s after the creation of the Islamic republic.

"The chartered flights will be the first stage of resuming the regular flights between the two countries, expected to start by June 1," Dr. Sabri said.

Both RJ and Iran Air will operate two regular flights a week between their capitals.

"The number of Iranian visitors to Jordan are expected to grow rapidly in line with facilities given by the government in terms of visa issuance for tourist groups and businessmen," Dr. Sabri added.

The resumption of air links reflected an improvement in political, bilateral ties since His Majesty King Hussein, Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

The Iranian visitor extended an invitation to Dr. Majali to visit Iran.


Also on Tuesday, of Tourism and Antiquities, Minister Aqil Biltaji met with an Iranian delegation, headed by Iran Tourism Department Director Akbar Mohammad Sayid, and discussed with them enhancing bilateral links.

According to Iranian figures, about 20,000 Iranian tourists have visited Jordan in the past four months, compared to 300,000 Iranians that visited Syria during the same period.

Damascus and Tehran have long maintained warm ties and operate direct flights.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											JAWAN - SERENADI				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SERENADI															
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179															
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 25/02/1998															
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE					
346,000	250,000	ARAB BANK	15.5	1.19	18	360	154260	335.00	336.00	1.00+					
2,680	1,650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.1	6.21	3	350	588	1.69	1.68	.01-					
5,300	4,610	THE HOUSING BK.	10.1	1.90	6	1721	8653	5.00	5.10	.10+					
920	620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.3	9.72	1	1000	720	.73	.72	.01-					
4,020	1,990	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.7	4.55	17	4562	9582	2.11	2.11	.00					
1,950	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BRIHA)	5	18.52	4	1000	805	.82	.81	.01-					
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 235.18	%CHG: +0.45	52	9168	174739
1	2,210	1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.4	6.64	30	19000	42910	2.16	2.26	.10+				
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 122.04	%CHG: +0.48	30	19000	42910
2,080	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.7	4.98	12	7250	14557	2.02	2.01	.01-					
7,500	3,700	VEHICLE OWNERS FED.	7.7	4.99	2	400	1404	3.70	3.51	.19-					
1,550	930	RAIL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	5	4100	4217	1.03	1.03	.00					
610	410	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	22.6	0.00	1	100	44	.46	.44	.02-					
4,050	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.5	0.00	2	700	2810	4.00	4.02	.02+					
1,090	900	DARQA EDUCATION	8.2	0.00	2	1500	1410	.95	.94	.01-					
1,910	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.2	0.00	1	2450	4198	1.72	1.71	.01-					
810	600	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	1	250	168	.68	.67	.01-					
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 117.04	%CHG: -0.02	33	16750	28808
4,450	2,690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.2	4.07	5	15700	42390	2.70	2.70	.00					
4,140	3,080	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	9.3	2.99	4	12200	41470	3.40	3.35	.05-					
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.9	8.66	16	2930	30120	10.30	10.27	.03-					
2,670	1,280	INDUSTRIAL COMM. INC.	9	0.00	2	200	264	1.35	1.32	.03-					
7,350	5,800	JOR. WOODS MILLS	10.4	3.10	1	250	1613	6.45	6.45	.00					
4,840	3,440	ARAB FARM. MFG.	13.2	4.18	30	20100	95418	4.76	4.78	.02+					
1,420	770	RATIA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	4	1700	1586	.90	.95	.05+					
6,000	4,400	OR ALDAMA DV. INV.	14.6	4.19	19	7850	46375	5.88	5.97	.09+					
2,480	2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.8	10.12	10	6400	15838	2.46	2.47	.01+					
610	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.3	0.00	42	42600	19952	.46	.47	.01+					
1,190	680	ARAB PAPER CONT. TRD.	25.1	0.00	2	550	1586	.90	.82	.02-					
650	400	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	7	2950	1623	.55	.55	.00					
2,050	1,370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	5	4250	1743	.42	.41	.01-					
4,610	3,700	ALADAMA DV.	25.2	4.27	4	480	1457	1.15	1.11	.01-					
3,000	2,920	NATL. CABLE WIRE MFG.	26.7	0.00	19	6750	7449	1.11	1.11	.00					
790	530	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	9	0.00	22	24000	14280	.61	.60	.01-					
1,960	1,250	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	17.0	5.26	38	18600	24724	1.34	1.33	.01-					
1,740	1,050	JOR. IND. ENDS.	9	0.00	79	3462	48775	.92	.90	.02-					
1,410	690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.4	12.99	13	29850	22207	.75	.77	.02+					
980	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	17.8	0.00	44	94850	91293	.98	.97	.01-					
1,080	1,230	EX. JAY READY WEAR	47.9	0.00	3	457	621	1.37	1.36	.01-					
1,250	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.5	0.00	14	5300	1276	1.17	1.19	.02+					
1,200	850	UNION CH. & VEC.	48.6	0.00	15	6050	6365	1.06	1.07	.01+					
810	650	JORDAN STEEL	33.0	6.85	11	25200	18434	.75	.73	.02-					
840	570	HID. EAST COMPLEX	6.1	15.15	61	107400	69693	.64	.66	.02+					
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 122.49	%CHG: +0.13	490	491079	610413
GRAND TOTAL											INDEX: 168.79	%CHG: +0.23	605	539997	856870
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 25/02/1998															
N	1,050	960	EXPORT & FIN. BNC. 75%	10.00	9	18700	14152	1.01	1.00	.01-					
N	530	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	10.00	36	145050	56102	.39	.39	.00					
N	660	480	NATL. COMMER. CENTERS	9	0.00	12	10046	.51	.54	.03+					
N	600	460	UNION CH. & VEC.	9	0.00	14	44550	9801	.72	.72	.00				
N	620	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	30	93050	.48	.50	.02+					
N	2,220	1,050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	9	0.00	2	20000	40000	1.95	2.00	.05+				
N	290	140	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-VEHCO	9	0.00	1	2850	400	1.7	.16	.01-				
N	640	370	ARAB FOOD & MFG.	9	0.00	22	26800	11304	.42	.43	.01+				
N	480	240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	29.9	0.00	23	33450	8866	.26	.26	.00				
N	550	280	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	5	3150	996	.30	.32	.02+				
N	750	380	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAHICO	9	0.00	20	42450	18978	.41	.40	.01-				
N	670	580	HID. EAST PHARM. 90%	9	0.00	5	3500	1830	.63	.62	.01-				
N	460	240	IND. ENG.	9	0.00	15	15250	4338	.28	.28	.00				
N	830	510	INDS. CERAMIC	14.2	0.00	1	200	108	.55	.54	.01-				
N	950	550	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	29	24856	16410	.66	.66	.00				
N	780	490	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	14	13600	7529	.56	.55	.01-				
N	950	470	OPTICAL HEARING 75%	9	0.00	9	27750	6598	.51	.54	.03+				
N	1,000	680	NAT. ALUMINIUM. 75%	96.0	0.00	8	3045	1339	.70	.69	.01-				
N	2,310	1,000	NUTRIDRAG	9	0.00	10	3235	3559	1.13	1.09	.04-				
N	1,000	750	KIBAL PRINT CO. 75%	9	0.00	6	60250	33015	.60	.60	.00				
GRAND TOTAL											271	\$86432	285179		

↑ : New 12 months high
↓ : New 12 months low
N : Stock dividend during the past 12 months
P : Listed during the past 12 months
P / E : P/E ratio is 100 or more
- : Negative P/E
E : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year



THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Currency
- Audience
- All
- Highest point
- Embarkment
- Astrosuit
- Shepard
- Delfy visibility
- Sun's fall
- Keep from happening
- Ducks' kin
- Freshly
- Smooth-headed
- Coloratura soprano Maria
- Contented
- Successfully
- Light touch
- "Play II" Sam
- Mystery board game
- Farm storage tower
- Delfy vocally
- Pizzazz
- Comic Fox
- Water fly
- Affirmative comment
- One of the
- Trumans
- Baked item
- Campus
- military org.
- Farm enclosures
- Parcel out
- Bring joy
- British mother
- Delfy visibility and vocally
- Advantage
- Weirder
- Painter's medium
- Oracle
- Carols for 63A
- Holiday, briefly

DOWN

- "Memory" musical
- Suffer
- heartbreak
- Sooty mallet
- Haw's partner
- Garlic sections
- Continue a subscription
- Finished
- Like NYC-to-New Jersey
- of Inquiry
- Stationed
- Toward shelter
- Sheep bleats
- Poker stake
- Tropical fruit
- Eye covetously
- Sigourney Weaver film
- Pinnacle
- Shrewd
- Nimble
- Volcanic flows
- Clumps of dirt
- Post-question work of art
- Native Alaskan
- Bulk of a body
- Swelling of
- Gulfine
- Winter Harle
- Genetic cools
- One and the
- out (dwindles)
- "Message received"
- Control board
- Pub choices
- Take on cargo
- Olympic sled
- Mineral vein
- Disable
- Bruins of coll. sports
- Military diner
- Charged particle
- Michael J.

Peanuts

I TOLD YOUR TEACHER WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT HER NEW BOYFRIEND.

SHE SAID YOU WERE RIGHT... HE'S REALLY STUPID AND SHE'S NEVER GOING TO SEE HIM AGAIN.

I COULD RUN THE WHOLE WORLD RIGHT HERE FROM UNDER MY BED!

Andy Capp

THE REFEREE HADN'T TURNED UP YET, AND WE NEED A STAND-IN. YOU'RE JUST THE L

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, February 26-27, 1998 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Central Bank plans strategy to upgrade banking system

THE CENTRAL Bank of Jordan has announced plans to map out a strategy to upgrade the banking system in the Kingdom. The Treasury said it plans to name a board to oversee the drafting of the strategy, which envisages swift banking transactions in the Kingdom, a central bank official said.

That includes replacing manual money transfer between commercial banks to a computerised system linking Jordan's 22 banks together, said the official, speaking

on customary condition of anonymity.

"It will save our clients a lot of time," he said, noting that transfers under the new system will only take "minutes" as opposed to the one-month period under the old system. Our aim is to develop the banking infrastructure, cope with global banking modernisation, accelerate economic activity and facilitate procedures at a time of high competition worldwide," he added.

Cabinet to consider authorising Municipality of Greater Amman to collect real estate tax

THE COUNCIL of Ministers will soon discuss an amendment to the "real estate tax law." The amendment authorises the mayor of the Municipality of Greater Amman to start collecting tax on buildings and land within the Amman region. Such a task is now under the jurisdiction of the minister of finance.

One reason given for such an amendment was that the municipality has the capability to collect the tax on its own and that, by doing so, it would be able to cut costs and secure much needed savings. Another reason was that the municipality would be stricter in collecting and following up on any landlord in default because the municipality itself is the party interest-

ed in the collection of the tax. Furthermore, the municipality will be able to draft its budget more accurately.

It has been learnt that the municipality will take into its ranks all the employees currently entrusted with collecting the tax. The employees are now paid from the municipality's budget.

The cadres and systems at the municipality have been developed and are presently successfully collecting various fees owed to it. The municipality has brought computers into its operations and has set up a specialised computer department. Consequently, the municipality has been able to prepare all financial programmes and to control all its earnings (Al Ra'i).

REUTERS • REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8103	0.6070	1.4631	128.40	1.4218	1787.19	2.0400	8.0687
DE Mark	0.5524	-	0.3351	0.8087	70.82	0.7853	987.02	1.1273	3.3623
GB Sterling	1.6474	2.3823	-	2.4131	211.00	2.3423	2943.14	3.3606	9.9839
CH Franc	0.6830	123.68	0.4141	-	87.07	0.0711	1220.01	138.35	4.1422
JP Yen	0.0078	1.4067	0.4721	1.1398	-	1.1064	13.90	168.86	4.7224
CA Dollar	0.7033	1.2881	0.4226	1.0123	1.11	-	1241.24	1.4181	4.2184
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0132	0.3396	0.8819	1392.90	0.7988	-	11.42	3.3966
NL Guilder	0.4901	98.68	0.2973	71.72	62.85	0.6988	875.42	-	2.8745
FR Franc	0.1648	0.2382	0.0599	24.1010	21.14	0.2342	33.60	-	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7508	0.3770	3.6400	0.3047	3.6727	1628.80	3.4015
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2973	0.6324	5.1412	0.4304	5.1874	2188.90	4.8044
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0812	0.98	407.65	0.9069
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	0.9491	-	5.86	0.8083	8.74	4054.70	8.0233
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0837	1.01	410.92	0.9345
Kuwait Dinar	3.2819	2.3236	12.3088	1.2372	11.95	-	12.05	5016.41	0.9345
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	1.0208	0.9911	0.0830	-	418.18	0.0202
Lebanese L1000	0.85	0.4632	2.4637	0.2468	2.3814	0.1993	2.4628	-	2.2284
Egyptian	0.2840	0.2081	1.1020	0.1108	1.0701	0.0898	1.0787	448.38	-

Energy					Mid-East Currencies				
Oils	Last	Previous	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	USD	DEM
Brent	13.32	13.06	0.2666	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0812	0.98	407.65
W. Texas	15.35	15.10	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0837	1.01
Bonny	13.32	13.06	3.2819	2.3236	12.3088	1.2372	11.95	-	12.05
Dubai	11.43	11.55	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	1.0208	0.9911	0.0830	-
U.L. Gas	155.00	155.00	0.85	0.4632	2.4637	0.2468	2.3814	0.1993	2.4628

Metal Prices					Currency Deposit Rates (Bld)				
Metal	Bld	Offer	Period	-1- Months	-3- Months	-6- Months	-9- Months	-1- Year	Year
Gold (oz's)	292	292.0	C/USD	5.53	5.56	5.58	5.62	5.63	5.63
Silver (oz's)	6.31	6.38	GBP	7.34	7.31	7.40	7.51	7.51	7.51
Platinum (oz's)	382.5	384.5	JPY	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.45	0.45	0.45
AL (3 Months) #N/A DRPRWA DRF			DEM	3.41	3.25	3.30	3.44	3.69	3.69
CU (3 Months) #N/A DRPRWA DRF			FRF	3.39	3.43	3.53	3.81	3.70	3.70
Zinc (3 Months) #N/A DRPRWA DRF			CHF	0.97	0.90	1.00	1.06	1.33	1.33
Lead (3 Months) #N/A DRPRWA DRF			ITL	6.00	5.00	0.84	0.24	5.08	5.08
NI (3 Months) #N/A DRPRWA DRF									

Main Equity Indices					Bourse				
Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls	Index	Value	Chng
New York	DOW JONES	8443.83	73.73	0.88	8448.07	8308.6	New York	S&P 500	1041.4
New York	S&P 500	1041.4	10.84	1.05	1041.78	1030.58	New York	FT-SE 100	5729.3
London	FT-SE 100	5729.3	78.3	1.39	5733.0	5681	London	NIKKEI 225	16360.64
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16360.64	182.84	1	16368.6	15932.0	Tokyo	CAC 40	3341.88
Paris	CAC 40	3341.88	78.28	2.43	3348.88	3274.09	Paris	DAX	4635.82
Frankfurt	DAX	4635.82	58.28	0.79	4651.01	4610.38	Frankfurt		

Unfair price dilemma reaches new high

By Suha Ma'ayeb
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN - A tug-of-war between subsidised cooperatives set up exclusively for over 250,000 military and civil personnel and superstores has sharpened with the latter considering plans to take them to court (over alleged abuses and unfair competition).

Despite repeated denials by the military consumer societies (MCS) that it was only letting in beneficiaries, many Jordanians, including this reporter, were able to enjoy trouble-free shopping

at one of its outlets without holding MCS cards.

The same applied to civil consumer societies (CCS), though its officials are generally stricter in making exceptions.

"Do you have a card," a guard standing outside the gate of the CCS store on the Eight Circle asked this reporter as she tried to enter. "No, I do not," she said adding that she was a frequent buyer from this store. "We are just asking because sometimes we get sudden visits from government inspection teams," he said in an apologetic manner.

For months, owners of superstores sprawling across Amman have been complaining of "unfair" price competition from both cooperatives who are exempt from paying income tax.

They held a press conference last week asking the government to ensure these societies were only serving beneficiaries. They are also pressing for a meeting with Minister of Trade and Supply Hani Mulki before considering taking legal action.

Unlike regular commercial stores, both cooperatives do not pay any taxes on purchases of locally-produced goods. While the CCS pays some customs on imported goods, the MCS does not.

"Despite the fact that the cooperatives' charter stipulates that their customers should be restricted to beneficiaries, they are open for the public, and this contradicts the spirit of free competition," said Azam Al Masri, general manager of Safeway which has two superstores in Amman.

"We are not against opening these outlets for everybody on condition the government gives us the same subsidies and tax exemptions granted to the civil and military consumption societies so that we can also cater to all segments of society," he added.

"We will accept this exception to the rule provided the government gives us the same exemptions so that all of us can cater for the market at a time when economic recession is harming the country," Mr. Masri said.

"We would love to offer low prices to our customers and to all citizens but we are paying custom duties. We have operational costs, electricity, salaries, insurance fees as well as incentive packages for our employees whereas these cooperatives get their money from the government," he indicated.

"These cooperatives also give the impression to the public that we are exploiting consumers because of our

higher prices, which means a bad reputation for the whole retail industry," Mr. Masri said.

He and other colleagues said this "unequal" competition, which was limiting their potential revenue, also contradicted the spirit of Jordan's decision to reform its economy, launch privatisation and join global market-oriented economies.

"We cannot compete with the government," Mr. Masri stressed.

Many Jordanians say they are forced to buy from these societies that offer a limited selection of basic commodities instead of the massive superstores because they are suffering from economic hardships.

Mr. Nizar Darwazah, president of Food Traders Association, said this unfair competition surfaced recently.

"We started noticing that they have opened their doors for non-beneficiaries," he said.

"But the issue is not alarming because it is known that 90 per cent of the goods in these societies are Jordanian-made products and 10 per cent are imported goods," he told the Jordan Times.

"But had the societies'

imported goods been subjected to fees, we would not have had a problem," he explained.

Ahmad Kreishan, head of the CCS, denied that the society's gates were open to all Jordanians.

"Our doors are not open to anyone. We haven't noticed any increase in demand or in the number of customers," he added.

"The market movement is as usual."

Mr. Kreishan said the CCS, which has 35 centres across Jordan, aimed at providing its beneficiaries with a wide choice of services at reasonable prices.

"We have a variety of the items on display such as meat, vegetables, cheese and others," he told the Jordan Times. "We do not want to compete with the private sector," he emphasised.

"More than 90 per cent of our products are local and we cater for a certain segment of the society (beneficiaries) according to our law and regulations," he stressed.

"All societies are notified to prohibit entrance for non-beneficiaries," he said adding that all beneficiaries should have their cards with them when they visit.

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Greene flashes home to beat Drummond and Bailey

MELBOURNE (AFP) — World 100 metres champion Maurice Greene blamed a strong headwind for costing him a new 100 metres world record at a grand prix athletics meet here late on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old American clocked the fastest time ever in Australia, winning in 10.06 seconds — well outside Olympic champion Donovan Bailey's world record of 9.84 seconds.

Canadian Bailey finished third behind Greene, who broke the 60 metres indoor world record earlier this month, and American Jon Drummond, who was fast away from the blocks in a strong international field.

Greene, who pipped Bailey in the 100 metres at last year's world championship in Athens, stormed his way to the front to overhaul Drummond.

"I am in world-record shape right now and if the wind had turned around, I believe that (Wednesday's run) was the world record," Greene said.

"I am very pleased with that time because of the amount of headwind I had in that race."

"I hope to break world records every time I run, unfortunately I am not able to do that."

Greene had been locked in a war of words with Bailey heading into the

race but downplayed their rivalry after his victory.

"It is always good to win, it doesn't matter who is in the race," he said.

"There has been a lot of talk over the past week and I was pumped up for it so I was giving it all I had."

"I was going to make sure that there wasn't any controversy about who won."

Bailey finished third in 10.36s, while Drummond, Greene's training partner, clocked 10.13s to finish second.

Three-time Olympic 100-metres finalist Dennis Mitchell of the United States was fifth in 10.40s.

Schumacher confident for season-opener

SCARPERIA (AFP) — Ferrari's Michael Schumacher said on Tuesday he is hoping for at least a podium finish when the 1998 Formula One world championship opens in Melbourne, Australia, on Sunday week.

Schumacher, who brought pre-season testing to an end at the Mugello circuit here, said he had faith in Ferrari's new F300 car.

"I hope to bring a cup back from Melbourne, and if it's the biggest one, so much the better," said the former two-time world champion.

"The results we've had

here give me confidence for the first race, given that we've now got a good level of reliability and the car is well-balanced."

Despite teething problems with the electronics and the all-new gearbox, the F300 has covered 7,000km since December. But Schumacher insisted: "We've still got work to do."

The season opens at the Australian circuit on March 8, with Schumacher again facing world champion Jacques Villeneuve in the Williams and a fresh assault from the McLaren team.

SCOREBOARD

NBA

Washington	124	Houston	112
New Jersey	110	Vancouver	101
Golden State	87	New York	82
Miami	104	Utah	102
LA Lakers	98	Milwaukee	81
San Antonio	105	Minnesota	99
Philadelphia	85	Phoenix	84

Philadelphia ATP tournament

Pete Sampras (USA x1) bt Xavier Malisse (Bel) 4-6, 6-3, 7-5
Thomas Enqvist (Swe x3) bt Emilio Alvarez (Spa) 6-4, 6-3

Oklahoma City WTA tournament

Miho Saeki (Jpn) bt Laura Golarsa (Ita) 6-2, 3-6, 7-5
Meredith McGrath (USA) bt Patricia Hy-Boulais (Can) 6-3, 5-7, 6-2
Tara Snyder (USA) bt Sandra Cacic (USA) 6-4, 7-6 (7/1)
Serena Williams (USA x5) bt Katrina Adams (USA) 6-1, 6-2
Venus Williams (USA x3) bt Nana Miyagi (Jpn) 6-3, 6-2
Annabel Ellwood (Aus) bt Alexandra Stevenson (USA) 6-4, 6-4
Lea Ghirardi-Rubbi (Fra) bt Emmanuelle Gagliardi (Swe) 2-6, 6-2, 6-4
Amy Frazier (USA x6) bt Kerry-Anne Guse (Aus) 4-6, 7-5, 7-5
Francesca Lubiani (Ita) bt Rika Hiraki (Jpn) 4-6, 7-5, 6-1

Guardian Direct Cup

Karol Kucera (Svk x7) bt Guillaume Raoux (Fra) 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (8/6), 6-4
Filip Dewulf (Bel) bt Galo Blanco (Spa) 6-2, 7-5
Cedric Pioline (Fra) bt Francisco Clavet (Spa) 6-1, 7-6 (7/5)
Petr Korda (Cze x1) bt David Prinosil (Ger) 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (2/7), 6-4
Magnus Gustafsson (Swe) bt Brett Steven (Nzl) 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-2
Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus x3) bt T. Johansson (Swe) 6-3, 6-2
Rainer Schuttler (Ger) bt Martin Damm (Cze) 7-5, 7-6 (7/3)
Wayne Ferreira (Rsa) bt Chris Wilkinson (Gbr) 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-2
Tim Henman (Gbr) bt Richard Krajicek (Ned x5) 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/2), 7-5

Linz WTA Tour event

L. Raymond (USA x5) bt M.-A. Sanchez-Lorenzo (Spa) 6-2, 6-3
Adriana Panatta (Cze) bt Karina Habsudova (Svk) 7-6 (7/1), retired
Silvia Farina (Ita) bt Yayuk Basuki (Ind x6) 6-3, 6-4
Amelie Mauresmo (Fra) bt Asa Carlsson (Swe) 6-0, 7-6 (10/8)
Magdalena Maleeva (Bul) bt Andrea Glass (Ger) 6-1, 6-0
Barbara Rittner (Ger) bt Nathalie Dechy (Fra) 6-3, 6-3
Karin Kschwendt (Aut) bt Katarina Stodenikova (Svk) 6-3, 2-6, 6-3
Alexandra Fusai (Fra) bt Denisa Chladkova (Cze) 7-5, 7-5
Miriam Oremans (Ned) bt Anne-Gaëlle Sidot (Fra) 7-6 (12/10), 6-7 (4/7), 6-3

Friendly international

Netherlands	3	Mexico	2
Portuguese Cnp (Semi-finals)			
Sporting Braga 2	Benfica	1	
Uniao Leiria	FC Porto	3	

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNIA HIRSH

COMING IN ON A WING AND A PRAYER

East-West vulnerable. South is declarer. Trick tricks should be there for the taking.

At both tables the opening lead was ducked in dummy and won in the closed hand after East played low. Declarer cashed the ace and king of diamonds and was thrilled when the queen dropped — that provided two dummy entries. But when declarer led a diamond to the jack, East brilliantly jettisoned the king of clubs. Now there was no way for declarer to set up clubs without allowing West to gain the lead for a fatal lead through the queen of spades — down two.

At the other table, South saw the danger of playing off the high diamonds. Instead declarer visualized this line of the cards as the only realistic chance to get home. After winning the king of spades, declarer led a low diamond and, when West followed low, inserted the nine. In with the queen, East's only safe return was a diamond. That was game. The bidding and opening lead were identical at the two tables, yet one declarer made the contract while the other failed.

South had a difficult bid to make on the second round, and three no trump is only a slight stretch. If dummy turns up with nothing more than king-queen in clubs and a

This hand was dealt in a team game. The bidding and opening lead were identical at the two tables, yet one declarer made the contract while the other failed.

South had a difficult bid to make on the second round, and three no trump is only a slight stretch. If dummy turns up with nothing more than king-queen in clubs and a

China race to crown 'world's fastest woman'

BEIJING (AFP) — Five top women sprinters from around the world will gather in southwestern China's Sichuan province in May to compete in the World's Fastest Women Sprinter Challenge, the official Xinhua news agency reported Wednesday.

The field will include world champion Marion Jones of the United States and countrywoman Gail Devers, a former world champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist, it said, quoting an official with the Chinese Track and Field Association.

Also competing will be five-time Jamaican Olympian and former 200-metre world champion Merlene Ottey, as well as 200-metre Olympic silver medalist Susanna Jayasinghe of Sri Lanka.

Representing the host country will be Li Xuemei, who clocked a surprise 10.79 in the 100-metre event at the Chinese National Games last year, one of the world's best times for 1997.

The reigning world record holder in both the 100 and 200 metres, former U.S. Olympic champion Florence Griffith-Joyner, will also be on hand as a non-participant, the report said.

Korda edges through

LONDON (AFP) — Australian Open champion and top-seed Petr Korda, edged through to the second-round of the Guardian Direct Cup at Battersea Park here on Tuesday with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (2/7), 6-4 win over German David Prinosil.

Top-seeded Korda is ranked No.2 in the world and Prinosil is 89th — but the German had beaten the Czech left-hander on the last two occasions they had met and he came close again on Tuesday.

"I should have won in straight sets," said Korda. "I served for the match at 5-3 in the second set and had two match points at 6-5. But he always plays well against me."

Prinosil, a qualifier, took advantage of Korda's lapses to win the second set tiebreaker but he, too, might have won in straight sets after leading 5-3 in the first set as well as winning the second.

"David could be in the top

30 very quickly if he continues to play like the way he played today," said Korda. Asked if he was keen to become No.1 in the world, Korda replied: "I do not think about No.1. If it happens, it happens. But I would not swap my Grand Slam for No.1."

"Winning the Australian Open was a dream. It will always be with me."

Third-seeded Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov advanced in rather easier fashion than Korda, beating Swede Thomas Johansson 6-3, 6-2.

Chris Wilkinson, the British No. 4 from Southampton, looked as if he might bring off a shock victory when he won the first set tie-break and then led 3-2 with a break in the second against South African Wayne Ferreira.

But the British qualifier was eventually beaten 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-2 by the 47th-ranked Ferreira.

Another home player Tim Henman finally halted the



World No. 2 Petr Korda returns a serve during his first round match against Germany's David Prinosil at the ATP Tour event at Battersea Park February 24. Korda, who can achieve the world number one ranking at this event, went on to defeat Prinosil 7-6 6-7 6-4 (Reuters photo)

worst slump of his career when he beat fifth-seeded former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 in 3hrs 34mins. Henman had been beaten

in the first-round of his four previous tournaments and he looked as though he might go the same way again when he dropped the first-set tie-break and then trailed 3-5 in the second-set.

"I've been going through the worst four weeks of my career," added Henman. "So it's great to win again, especially against someone of Krajicek's calibre. After all — he's a top-ten player."

Salt Lake City bustles ahead of 2002 Winter Olympics

SALT LAKE CITY (AFP) — As the Olympic flag was passed to Salt Lake City's mayor at the closing ceremonies in Nagano, Japan on Monday, this western U.S. city in the shadow of the rugged Wasatch Mountains had a jolt of anticipation.

Highways here are being reconstructed, construction crews are hard at work on a 50,000-seat stadium and an Olympic village, while nearby ski areas, most notably Park City, are sprucing up their facilities.

The premier Park City ski area has hosted a number of World Cup skiing events over the past 20 years, but the mammoth-sized Olympics means that many of the events will spill over into surrounding ski resorts and rinks.

Since Salt Lake City was named in June 1995 as the 2002 Olympic winter events site, it has been struggling to find ways to accommodate competitors and what is expected to be an unprecedented number of visitors.

Park City, which lies just southeast of Salt Lake City, is ready for the giant slalom and snowboarding

events while nearby Deer Valley is preparing for the slalom and freestyle events.

At Bear Hollow Winter Sports Park just north of Park City, the combination bobsled-luge track — the only certified bobsled track in the United States — has been in operation for two years.

But an access road needs to be constructed and the 120-metre ski jumping hill has yet to be built.

And the modest resort of Snowbasin, about 80 kilometres north of Salt Lake City, is at the heart of a dispute between the owners and the federal government over who has the responsibility to build an access road.

Snowbasin is the site of the downhill and Super G events but there are few base facilities and the tiny, winding road which currently services the small resort is inadequate to handle Olympic crowds.

In Salt Lake City, many of the sites are already in operation. The Delta Center, home of the Utah Jazz basketball team, will host the figure

skating and short track speedskating. The Rice Stadium will be expanded to seat 50,000 people for the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as most hockey events. The speedskating oval that lies just west of the city still lacks a roof.

Major construction remains for the Olympic Village, which is being planned on the University of Utah campus. A final decision still has not been made on how to house the media.

Construction is set to begin on the sites for the biathlon and Nordic ski events that will be held at Wasatch State Park near the tiny hamlet of Midway.

Utah is also rehabilitating its interstate highway systems and adding a light rail line to help handle traffic. And a good chunk of the funds for the building is being raised by Utah residents themselves.

The Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee is budgeting about \$1 billion to spend on the games, well below the \$13 billion spent in Nagano.

FINA to strengthen anti doping rules

BEIJING (AFP) — The world swimming body FINA will hold a special congress in March to strengthen its anti-doping rules. FINA Press Commission chairman Camillo Cametti said on Wednesday.

It will follow on from FINA's task force meeting in Switzerland on March 5 and 6 and will toughen doping control measures.

China, which this week is hosting the Beijing leg of the FINA World Cup swimming competition, has been the target of new doping allegations in recent weeks.

Four Chinese swimmers were found to have taken the illegal diuretic Triamterene, which medical experts say is a masking agent for anabolic steroid use, in the world championships in Perth in January.

The failed tests followed the disqualification of breaststroker Yuan Yuan after customs officials found 13 vials of human growth hormone in her bags at Sydney airport.

Some 27 Chinese swimmers have tested positive for doping in the last decade.

Durie rushed to hospital on night of drama

GLASGOW (AFP) — Scotland striker Gordon Durie was rushed to hospital and his Rangers team-mate Paul Gascoigne limped off injured as the Premier giants were held to a 1-1 draw at Kilmarnock Tuesday night.

Durie was involved in a sickening collision with Gary Holt at the start of the second-half when the two players went for a ball on the edge of Rangers' penalty box. Although both resumed playing after a matter of minutes,

Durie suddenly collapsed ten minutes later and was surrounded by anxious players from both sides.

Medical staff were joined by Rangers doctor Donald Cruickshank and concerns grew for Durie's condition.

He was immediately taken from the ground to Glasgow's Southern General Hospital which specialises in brain surgery.

Durie had come on to replace Gascoigne in the 35th minute when the England

midfielder, who had hurt his shin in a challenge with John Henry early in the game, limped off.

It was a frustrating night altogether for Rangers, who are bidding for a record 10 successive titles. They now have 53 points from 26 matches — only one point more than rivals Celtic who have a game in hand and who play third-placed Hearts on Wednesday.

Kilmarnock, beaten 4-0 by Celtic last weekend, regained

their pride in front of their home crowd and went clear after just 15 minutes following a dreadful mix-up in the Rangers' defence.

Andy Goram came racing off his line screaming at Joachim Bjorklund that a long ball down the middle was his, but the Swedish defender nodded it over the goalkeeper's head and Paul Wright was on hand to knock the ball into an empty net for the 100th Premier League goal of his career.

Rangers had to wait until the 68th minute to equalise — Then picking up a loose ball 20 yards out and curling it over Marshall and into the corner of the net.

In the night's other Premier League clash, Dundee United and Hibernian also shared a 1-1 draw at Tannadice.

United took a 73rd-minute lead with an Andy Dow own-goal, but Hibernian skipper John Hughes headed home an equaliser from close range two minutes later.

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Sports



Mexican defender Sigifredo Mercado (L) and Dutch midfielder Michael Mols (R) battle for control of the ball February 24 during the first half of exhibition play in Miami. Holland defeated Mexico 3-2 (Reuters photo)

Balakov to stay with Stuttgart

COLOGNE (AFP) — Bulgarian international Krassimir Balakov, acknowledged as one of the Bundesliga's most talented players, is to ride out his rough patch at Stuttgart and promised Tuesday to honour his contract until the middle of 2002.

"Bala" said in a good, long talk with me that he would like to stay and that he sees his future with Stuttgart, club president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder told a press conference.

There had been widespread reports that Balakov was ready to walk out on the club.

"We have a whole week of sensational journalism behind us, which I find irresponsible," Mayer-Vorfelder said.

Balakov, however, started the ball rolling himself in an interview with the weekly magazine "Sport Bild" in which he expressed his dissatisfaction with Stuttgart's failure to win a league title.

"My limit is top place," Balakov was quoted as saying. "I have been in Stuttgart for almost three years now and it is always the same. We play well but at some point in the season we break down. It is no longer an accident, you can bank on it."

There is a certain barrier you have to overcome as a club. When I have the feeling we can't manage it then ..."

Since the interview was published Stuttgart have not won a game. They were dumped 3-0 by Bayern Munich in the German Cup semi-finals and then lost to Kaiserslautern in the league.

Coach Joachim Loew stayed cool during the future.

"I always believed he would stay, because Krassimir is a man of his word," Loew said.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Davenport gets Fed Cup call

WHITE PLAINS (AFP) — Captain Billie Jean King has called up world number-two Lindsay Davenport to lead the United States in their Fed Cup first-round clash against the Netherlands at Charlotte in North Carolina from April 18. The 21-year-old Davenport, who beat world number-one Martina Hingis in the final in Tokyo three weeks ago and who was a member of the winning 1996 United States team, did not play when the Americans lost 3-2 to the Netherlands in the first-round last year. Billie Jean King has taken over as team captain from Martina Navratilova.

Hidden to join Leeds

VIENNA (AFP) — New Austrian international Martin Hiden is to sign for English Premiership club Leeds United on Wednesday, the Austrian news agency APA reported Tuesday. Rapid Vienna player Hiden, 24, has reportedly agreed to a deal that will last through June 2001. The former Sturm Graz defender will be manager George Graham's 10th signing for Leeds. Hideo, who won his first cap for Austria last week, becomes the third Austrian playing in the Premiership — joining Arsenal keeper Alex Manninger and Sheffield Wednesday striker Christian Mayrleib.

Italy to take on Sweden

ROME (AFP) — Italy will play Sweden on June 2 in their last warm-up match before the World Cup finals. It was announced on Tuesday. Though the venue and other details have yet to be finalised, it will probably be held in Stockholm, with an evening kick-off. Italy's next friendly is on April 22 against Paraguay at Parma.

There may, however, yet be another organised in between that match and the game against the Swedes, who finished third at USA '94 but who failed to qualify for France '98. This year's tournament gets underway on June 10, with Italy playing their first group match the following day against Chile in Bordeaux.

Edmundo reported missing

FLORENCE (AFP) — Fiorentina reported their new striker Edmundo to the Italian League on Tuesday, after the Brazilian fanned out in protest at not having a guaranteed first-team place. Edmundo, bought from Vasco da Gama last month for \$6.5 million, went back to Rio de Janeiro in a huff last week after coach Alberto Malesani told him he would have to spend time on the subs bench. The club have been waiting since then for contact from either the player or his agent, but the only sight of the Brazilian has been widely-published photos of him partying at the Rio carnival. Edmundo risks anything from his wages being suspended or a heavy fine, and the club may even seek sanctions from FIFA. For the moment, Fiorentina officials are split between those who believe he should be sold immediately — Vasco da Gama are reportedly willing to take him back — and those who still believe he has a future in Italy. Edmundo's self-imposed exile has coincided with a fine spell of form for the man he was supposed to replace alongside Argentine ace Gabriel Batistuta, Brazilian-born Belgian Luis Oliveira.

Little quits Aston Villa

LONDON (AFP) — Brian Little resigned Tuesday as manager of English Premier Division club Aston Villa. His decision comes after Villa's 2-1 defeat at Wimbledon on Saturday, which left the club 15th in the 20-team Premier League. Villa face a UEFA Cup quarter-final, first leg match away to Atletico Madrid next Tuesday. Club chairman Doug Ellis said in a statement: "I am sad and disappointed to announce that Brian Little has resigned as manager of Aston Villa forthwith. "We are in the process of securing the services of another team manager, but in the meantime Allan Evans and the coaching staff of Kevin Macdonald, Tony McAndrew, Malcolm Beard and Paul Barron will be in charge." Ellis added: "We wish Brian the best of luck in whatever he chooses to do in the future."

Sampras taken all the way by unheralded Belgian

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — Under pressure world number one Pete Sampras struggled through to the second round of the ATP tournament here late on Tuesday beating teenage Belgian qualifier Xavier Malisse in three sets, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

The 26-year-old American, who must reach the semi-finals here this week to ward off the challenge to his top spot from Australian Open champion Petr Korda, paid tribute to Malisse, 17 and ranked 851st in the world — the lowest ranked player Sampras had ever played.

"He has a lot of talent. I was really lucky to get through this one," Sampras said.

"He had nothing to lose and after he won the first set he really relaxed and played all his shots," he added.

Sampras, who has a 263 points lead over Korda and 368 over Australia's U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter, has won eight matches this season but is still searching for his first tournament success.

Malisse said that he had treated the match like any other and had not been overawed by his opponent's record of 10 Grand Slam titles.

West Asian Zone basketball qualifiers Jazireh upset Iran's Zobohan

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Hosts Al Jazireh Aramex Wednesday scored a momentous 68-56 victory over Iranian champions Zobohan at the 1st West Asian Zone basketball qualifiers currently underway with five teams taking part.

The win kept alive Al Jazireh's qualifying chances although they still have two difficult matches against Lebanon's Al Riyadi and Syria's Al Wihdeh.

Zobohan had lost to Lebanon's Al Riyadi in the opening match and have thus lost their qualifying chances although they were billed as favourites prior to the tournament.

Although the match could have gone either way with both teams alternating the lead, Al Jazireh set the pace in the second half and demonstrated the team work they are well-known for.

Their opponents on the other hand lost the efforts of key player Mohsen Sadeq after which they appeared in disarray and succumbed to defeat.

Al Jazireh's Husam Lutfi, Ma'an Odeh and Yousef Abu Bakr turned a 37-35 halftime Iranian lead to victory as they scored and rebounded, clearly eclipsing the return of Al Ahli's veteran playmaker Samir Murqus who came out of a two-season retirement and signed with Al Jazireh.

Al Jazireh led 8-2 at the beginning of the match but Zobohan soon caught up at 10-8. They still trailed 14-9 before taking a 17-14 lead in the 9th minute.

Jazireh's Abu Bakr scored together with Naser Alawneh and Lutfi but scoring remained close with both teams alternating the lead.

Al Jazireh excelled in defensive rebounding but had many turnovers which would have otherwise given them a bigger lead. Both teams tied 32-32 before the Iranians led 36-32 and took a 37-35 halftime lead.

Two consecutive three-pointers by Ala Bilbeisi and Murqus gave Al Jazireh a 49-43 lead at the beginning of the second half. From then on they did not look back as the Iranians tried in vain to catch up.

Abu Bakr and Odeh combined efforts to outscore their opponents 11-2 in the next six minutes taking Al Jazireh's lead to 61-50.

Lutfi who was his team's top scorer scored and rebounded as Al Jazireh kept up the momentum and ended the match 68-56.

Jazireh temporarily topped the standings after the evening's first match. Syria's Al Wihdeh were to play Yemen's Al Mina' in the late match.

Lebanon's Al Riyadi might still be considered the favourites after clearing two hurdles. They needed overtime to overcome Syria's Al Wihdeh 97-95 and had beat Zobohan 89-80 boosting their chances of taking the sole qualifying berth to the Asian Clubs Championship which will be held in Malaysia April 25-May 2.

In other results so far, Zobohan beat Mina' 125-51, while Al Jazireh also had no trouble beating Al Mina' 96-26.

Al Jazireh Aramex, the Kingdom's reigning champions, are hosting the Feb. 23-27 event amid preparations to retain the Kingdom's title which they won last year ending a 30-year domination by rivals Orthodoxy and Al Ahli.

Four referees from the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) are on hand for the tourney televised live on JTV and Future TV of Lebanon.

The Asian Clubs Championship will include 10 titleholding Asian teams: the top four from the last championship, one each from the ABC's five zones and the host nation.

The ABC five zones are: Middle Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia and the Gulf.

Al Riyadi have three professionals on their lineup. The Iranian team also boasts two Yugoslav pros.

While ABC allow foreign players in such tournaments, Aramex Chairman Fadi Ghandour noted that he wanted no change on his lineup which will soon compete for the Kingdom's title.

Aramex is the sole sponsor of the tourney at an estimated cost of JD20,000 and the company announced that hosting the qualifiers in Amman were part of celebrations marking Aramex's 15 years of operation.

Al Orthodoxy and Al Ahli had previously taken part in the Asian Clubs championship with Al Ahli securing the best Jordanian showing with a fourth place finish in 1995.

Al Jazireh won the Kingdom's basketball crown in 1997 leaving traditional rivals Al Ahli in second place and Al Orthodoxy third.

Al Orthodoxy had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989. Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 while Al Orthodoxy came back to win in 1995 and 1996 and are currently preparing to get back the title.

Standings (excluding Wednesday's late match)

	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Jazireh	2	2	-	164	82	4
Zobohan	3	1	-	261	208	4
Riyadi	2	2	-	186	175	4
Mina'	-	-	2	77	221	2
Wihdeh	1	-	1	95	97	1

Heat beat Jazz; Suns lose

rebounds. Hakeem Olajuwon had 19 points and 10 rebounds; and Charles Barkley had 16 points and nine rebounds before fouling out with 2:56 left.

Warriors 87, Knicks 82: In New York, the Golden State Warriors became the first Western Conference team to win at Madison Square Garden this season by stunning the New York Knicks.

Allan Houston scored 25 for New York, which had won all seven of its previous home games against teams from the west.

Heat 104, Jazz 102: In Salt Lake City, Tim Hardaway had four points and an assist in the final 48 seconds as the Miami Heat won their eighth straight road game.

Utah missed two shots in the final five seconds that could have tied or won the game. Karl Malone missed an open jumper with five seconds left and after Voshon Lenard miscalled a free throw for Miami, John Stockton's desperation 3-pointer from midcourt fell short.

Utah had its seven-game winning streak snapped and lost for the fifth time at home this season.

Lakers 98, Bucks 81: In Milwaukee, Shaquille O'Neal had 21 points and 12 rebounds, and Eddie Jones scored 20 points as the Los Angeles Lakers snapped a four-game road losing streak.

Rick Fox and Robert Horry each had 13 points for the Lakers, who played without ailing guard Nick Van Exel.

Spurs 105, Timberwolves 99: In San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 26 points and Vinny Del Negro had a season-high 23 as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 105-99 Tuesday night.

Kevin Garnett led Minnesota with 25 points, while Stephon Marbury added 24.

76ers 85, Suns 84: In Phoenix, Derrick Coleman hit a last-second 5-meter jumper to give the Philadelphia 76ers their first win in Phoenix in 13 years.

It was only Philadelphia's second win over Phoenix in the last 15 games.

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Mubarak, Arafat discuss reviving Mideast peace

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Wednesday discussed ways to revive Arab-Israeli peace talks that were overshadowed in recent weeks by the crisis over Iraq.

The two leaders expressed the hope that with the threat of war over the region dissipating, the United States will now exert more efforts to avoid the Middle East peace talks from stagnating, Osama Al Baz, Mr. Mubarak's top adviser, told reporters.

He said Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Arafat held closed door talks and then were joined by aides.

After the talks, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said a series of meetings between the two sides would be held in Cairo next week to coordinate positions. He gave no details.

Mr. Mubarak and other

Egyptian officials have complained in recent days said that while the United States was so forceful in imposing Security Council resolutions on Iraq, it has been soft on Israel.

Mr. Mubarak discussed these concerns with his cabinet earlier Wednesday, Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Al Sherif said.

He said Mr. Mubarak "stressed the importance that the international community should be just and balanced in dealing with the region's issues, especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track."

"In this framework, President Mubarak is meeting... Arafat to coordinate positions concerning the moves for the next stage [of peace talks]," he added.

The Al Jomhuriya newspaper said Mr. Mubarak received a telephone call from U.S. President Bill Clinton late Tuesday, and the two leaders

discussed reactivating the Middle East peace process.

Arab states are hoping that there will be a serious focus on peace negotiations now that Iraq has agreed to open Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's palaces to unfettered inspection by U.N. weapons inspection, averting the threat of U.S. military strikes.

The Mideast peace talks have been stumbling over several issues, including how much land in the West Bank Israel should hand over to the Palestinians, the opening of an airport in the Gaza Strip and safe passages linking the Palestinian autonomous areas.

Mr. Arafat, who was in Cairo only for a few hours, also met with Sheikh Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas. Sheikh Yassin, who was released from jail in Israel in September, is undergoing treatment here.

Netanyahu searches for new spy chief to revamp Mossad

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was searching Wednesday for a new chief to revamp the Mossad spy agency, in turmoil after the resignation of the man blamed for a bungled operation in Jordan.

Mr. Netanyahu has several candidates in mind to replace Danny Yatom, who quit as head of the agency Tuesday five months after Mossad agents botched an attempt to assassinate a Hamas leader in Amman in September, Israeli media reported.

Mr. Yatom, 53, stepped down after an official commission of inquiry earlier this month found he "erred" over the failed operation, which damaged both the Mossad's reputation and ties with Jordan, Israel's closest Arab ally.

But one Israeli newspaper reported that his resignation, which brought an end to a 35-year career in Israel's defence establishment, followed another failed Mossad operation.

"The [last] failure, whose details can not yet be published, was not the main reason but it made the difference," respected analyst Nahum Barnea wrote in the best-selling Yediot Aharonot newspaper.

Israeli newspapers said the Mossad needed a major overhaul, but that there did not

Another Mossad mission fails

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli newspaper reported Wednesday that the Mossad spy agency has botched another operation, and that this failure contributed to the decision of the Mossad chief to resign.

The Yediot Aharonot daily wrote Wednesday that another Mossad operation has failed, but that "details are not allowed to be published at this stage." Israel's military

appear to be anyone now in the agency with the experience or ability for the job.

"The Mossad's problem is not only who will sit at the top," analyst Yossi Melman wrote in the Haaretz newspaper.

"The agency needs a serious shake-up, structural changes, a redefinition of its mission and especially better control and supervision."

The top candidate is former Mossad chief Shabtai Shavit, known for his strong experience in operations, which Haaretz said was desperately needed after Mr. Yatom's failure.

Mr. Netanyahu sent Mr. Shavit to Jordan several times

recently to help improve relations, Israel Radio reported. Another possibility is former Mossad Deputy Ephraim Halevy, who has a background as supervisor of relations with international intelligence organisations and also boasts warm relations with King Hussein, Haaretz said.

Mr. Halevy is currently Israel's ambassador to the European Union.

King Hussein was reportedly furious over the attack against Khaled Mista'al, political leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), and had threatened not to resume security ties with the Jewish state until Mr. Yatom was removed.

Turk diplomat meets in Syria on ties

DAMASCUS (AFP) — A top Turkish diplomat, Aykut Ceterge, has met with Syria's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Adnan Omran on ways to relaunch talks between the two countries, a Turkish diplomat said Wednesday.

Mr. Ceterge, the head of the Middle East department of Turkey's foreign ministry and the highest-level Turkish official to visit in three years, met with Mr. Omran on Tuesday, the diplomat told AFP.

The Turkish official is due

to meet later Wednesday with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa.

Mr. Ceterge's visit is aimed at preparing for restarting a dialogue which has been suspended since September 1995, the date of the last tripartite meeting of Turkey, Syria and Iran on the north of Iraq, the diplomat said.

The tripartite consultations were initiated after the end of the 1991 Gulf war, which created a power vacuum in Kurdish northern Iraq.

Turkish-Syrian relations are strained by Ankara's charges that Damascus supports Turkish-Kurdish rebels in southern Turkey who have been fighting the central government since 1984.

Damascus accuses Ankara of limiting the amount of water which flows from Turkish highlands down the Euphrates River through Syria and Iraq. It also opposes Turkey's military cooperation with Israel since 1996, calling it direct against Syria.

Israel peace nets bitter catch for Gaza fishermen

By Nidal Al Maghrabi
Reuters

GAZA — As the fishermen of Gaza's ragtag commercial fleet put out to sea on a sullen, storm-whipped dawn, the hardship of wringing a worthwhile catch is only the second item on the long list of their concerns.

The first is not getting caught themselves.

No matter how early fisherman Jawad Al Amoudi, 27, begins his working day, he knows Israeli navy gunboats will be crawling for him and the other Gazans scratching out a living from their sliver of the eastern Mediterranean.

"They shoot at our boats, either shoot in the air or in the water, to scare us and to drive us back," Mr. Amoudi said.

The Israeli army maintains that its naval presence off Palestinian-ruled Gaza keeps guerrillas from smuggling arms

into the Strip or using it as a base for seaborne attacks on Israel.

But the fishermen say the navy — and the Israeli-PLO peace deal that seems only to have intensified its operations — is choking their livelihood and endangering their lives.

"They complain that the navy hounds them, pursuing them even within the Palestinians' recognised fishing waters, at times detaining them and impounding their boats at the nearby Israeli port of Ashdod."

"They question the fishermen before handing them to us, but they usually keep the boats for weeks and sometimes for months," said Palestinian naval police officer, Mohammad Al Sinwar.

The Israeli army said in response that fishermen were detained only when they strayed from designated waters.

"Boats that stray from the permissible fishing area and which

raise suspicions are checked and transferred to a navy base for further investigation," a spokesman said.

"At the end of the inquiry the fishermen are freed to the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA) and later, when the investigation is completed, the boats are returned to their owners. The navy refrains from obstructing fishing activity that is conducted according to the agreement."

Jobless turn to the sea

Growing numbers of Gazans have turned to fishing in recent years, as Israeli leaders responded to suicide bombings and other guerrilla attacks by denying entry to thousands of Palestinians who had commuted for years to jobs in Israel.

"Even children left schools to learn the job of their fathers, women hurried to help their

husbands to prepare the nets, hundreds of families have become dependent on fishing," said Amoudi, a resident of Gaza's coastal Shati refugee camp.

Mr. Amoudi himself began fishing in 1992 when he was barred from a \$28-a-day job as a plasterer.

Now his dreams centre on returning home to his wife and his three children with money in his pockets and a basket full of fresh fish in his hands, a tall order as rising numbers of anglers are herded into shrinking fishing grounds.

Mr. Amoudi said a main problem has been that peace accords between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel limit Gazans to a fishing range of 20 miles off the Gaza coast.

"In the past fishermen could go more than 60 to 70 miles away," he said.

Israel "not only confiscates [Arab] land, but it is now also confiscating sea water," said fisherman Hassan Abu Al Kheir.

At the same time, the number of Gaza fishermen has doubled to more than 2,000, Mr. Sinwar told Reuters.

"Our area is a passing destination for fish, and the great number of fishermen within a limited distance has made it hard for everybody to make a good living," Mr. Amoudi said.

Gaza's precarious economy, battered by more than a quarter century of Israeli occupation following the 1967 Middle East war, has declined even further since a 1993 peace deal accord named most of the teeming Strip over to self-rule.

The fishermen believe the grey naval vessels off the Gaza coast have become more vigilant since Israeli land forces ceded their posts to Palestinian

police in 1994.

In 1990, navy patrol boats failed to net 11 Palestinian guerrillas who manoeuvred their speed boat to the Nitzanim beach south of Tel Aviv in a bid to kill Israelis. Troops patrolling the coast killed four and captured the other seven before they could carry out their attack.

No more links with Egypt back on the beach, fishermen faced down February gusts to wrestle their boats into the powerful waves, some using old tractors to drag the vessels, others bare hands.

But despite the challenges, the Gazans know they are fortunate to have boats at all.

Mohammad Zaqout, director of the Al Tawfiq Cooperative Society of Fishermen, said about 40 boats were held by the Israelis at the Ashdod Harbour pound in 1997.

Some of the boats were still in Israeli custody, he said.

Before the peace agreement, Gaza fishermen and their Egyptian counterparts maintained an at-sea commercial trade.

The practice ended with the peace agreement, as did other activities the fishermen said they have voluntarily renounced in deference to the PNA.

One said that before 1994 they dropped wrecked cars into the water to block fish from swimming towards Egypt or Israel.

"The idea was to catch as much as we could of the passing fish, but not any longer."

As the morning wore on, a harried Mr. Amoudi was losing hope of being able to start the motor of his boat.

"Another day off, it is either the Israelis or the engine, you never know who is to blame," he said, looking in desperation at the sea.



FLOATING PHONE: Anatoly Vorobiov from Dinskaya Stanitsa (village) near the city of Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia, asks for help from the only working phone, after floods hit his village Tuesday. Fast-melting winter snows have flooded more than 22,000 homes in southern Russia near the coast of Azov Sea (AP photo)

First relief trucks arrive in north Sudan

NAIROBI (AFP) — The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) said Wednesday it had finally succeeded in delivering urgently needed food to starving refugees in Bhar El Ghazal in southern Sudan.

The first 120 tonnes of sorghum from a WFP convoy of 400 tonnes arrived in the northern part of Bhar El Ghazal on Sunday, after a three-week, 900-kilometre journey across rough terrain from Uganda.

The food will sustain

51,000 people for six days, the WFP said in a statement.

"The first road convoy is a great achievement, especially considering our extreme difficulties in delivering food to Bhar El Ghazal by air," WFP deputy coordinator for U.N. Operation Lifeline Sudan, David Fletcher, was quoted as saying.

"Unfortunately, the situation is still serious because only a quarter of the population in northern Bhar El Ghazal can be reached by

road," Mr. Fletcher added.

On Feb. 4, the Sudanese government suspended flights by relief agencies to Bhar El Ghazal, where more than 100,000 people have been displaced by recent fighting and are in urgent need of food and other types of assistance.

WFP plans to take advantage of the remaining four to five weeks of dry season weather to send more road convoys to Bhar El Ghazal, and is currently bolstering its

food stocks at Koboko in northwest Uganda in preparation.

As part of the 1998 U.N. appeal for Sudan launched last week, WFP has requested \$59.4 million for food aid and transport, which includes air-lift operations.

WFP estimates that 75,350 tonnes of emergency food aid will be required in 1998 for 2.4 million war and drought-affected civilians, mainly women, children and the elderly.

Cyprus cabinet quits for new government

NICOSIA (R) — Cyprus' cabinet resigned on Wednesday, paving the way for the appointment of a new government after Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides' reelection earlier this month, officials said.

Mr. Clerides is expected to announce a new government on Thursday, ahead of a parliamentary ceremony on Saturday where he will be sworn in as president of Cyprus for five more years.

Media reports have suggested that several members of his 11-member cabinet, including Foreign Minister Ioannis Cassoulides and Finance Minister Christodoulos Christodoulou, will keep their posts.

"All ministers placed their resignations at the disposal of the president," government spokesman Manolis Christodoulos told reporters after the cabinet met for the last time on Wednesday.

Most political parties are expected to be represented in the new administration with the exception of the centre-right Democratic Party and Communist Akel.

Both parties, which supported the bid of former Foreign Minister George Iakovou in the elections, turned down Mr. Clerides' offer to participate in a unity government.

U.S. officials concerned by purported Islamic edicts

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. intelligence officials said on Tuesday they were taking very seriously purported Islamic religious edicts advocating attacks on U.S. civilians and allied interests worldwide.

The purported decrees by unnamed clerics were tied to U.S. Middle East policy overall, not merely possible U.S.-led strikes on Iraq, averted for now, in the standoff over U.N. arms inspections.

Despite the deal between Iraq and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan that ended the immediate threat of U.S. military action, "we are still concerned about the threat," a U.S. intelligence official told Reuters. "It is something that is being taken very seriously."

A text published on Monday in the Arabic-language London newspaper Al Quds Al Arabi said guerrilla attacks should continue until U.S. forces "retreat" from Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem.

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies — civilians and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it in order to liberate the Al Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem] and the Holy

Mosque [Mecca] from their grip," it said.

The edict was published in the name of a group headed by Osama Ben Ladin, a Saudi national branded by the U.S. State Department as a guerrilla financier and "well-known terrorist." The subject of a U.S. criminal investigation, Ben Ladin is reported to be sheltering in Afghanistan.

A translation of the text published in Ben Ladin's name was made available by the senate judiciary subcommittee on terrorism, which released it in conjunction with a hearing Tuesday on foreign guerrilla operations in the United States.

A second text released by the Senate panel purported to be a declaration of jihad, or holy war, against the United States and Britain. Issued in the name of a coalition of Muslim groups in Britain and dated Feb. 10, it called for attacks until U.N. economic sanctions against Iraq were lifted.

U.S. intelligence officials described both texts as supposedly based on "fatwas." In the most famous such decree, the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, spiritual leader of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, "sentenced to death British author Salman

Rushdie for unflattering references to Mohammad in his novel "The Satanic Verses." "These fatwas are the first from these groups that explicitly justify attacks on American citizens anywhere in the world," the counterterrorism centre at the Central Intelligence Agency said in a memorandum dated Monday and released Tuesday.

"Both groups have hinted in the past that civilians are legitimate targets, but this is the first religious ruling sanctifying such attacks," the centre said in the memo released by Senator Jon Kyl, the Arizona Republican who chairs the senate panel on technology, terrorism and government information.

A senior FBI counterterrorism official, responding to a question from Kyl at the hearing, said Americans should take such threats very seriously.

"We do see... increased threats toward American targets, not only military but soft targets around the world, U.S. businesses, businesses, women, tourists and targets of that nature," Dale Watson of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) international terrorism operations section said. "I think this is a trend."

Madonna admirers cheer Kofi Annan in Paris

PARIS (R) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan looked slightly puzzled when he emerged from his Paris hotel to a rousing welcome from hordes of excited teenagers waiting for American rock star Madonna. Witnesses said Annan, who arrived in Paris after peace negotiations in Baghdad and was going to dine with President Jacques Chirac, smiled and waved as the crowd cheered when he was bundled into his car by security men. It was not immediately clear if the youths really knew who he was or if he knew that Madonna, who showed up five minutes later, was booked in the same luxury hotel.

Danish MP wants toys for pigs

COPENHAGEN (R) — A liberal MP seeking re-election to the Danish parliament has said the country's 11 million pigs should be given toys to play with. In a bid to woo the growing environmental and animal rights lobby in a country which has twice as many pigs as people, opposition Liberal Party Deputy Mariann Fischer Boels has proposed a string of measures designed to improve the welfare of farm animals, including toys like rubber balls to keep pigs active and animal washing facilities. Niels Hojland, a candidate for the rival Progress Party, said the next step would be to give pigs video cassettes and saunas.

Jackson lookalike fools London fashion crowd

LONDON (AFP) — A hoaxer dressed like U.S. pop superstar Michael Jackson fooled crowds at London's Fashion Week when he arrived to watch one of the week's raunchiest shows. The man, wearing a black suit with the singer's trademark hat and face mask, sat in the front row to view the see-through creations of designer Julien Macdonald. Bob Jones, a spokesman for Michael Jackson Productions in New York said that the artist was not in London but on "personal business" in South Korea. "I don't think he would be annoyed about it; in fact I expect he will take it as the most serious form of flattery," Jones said.

Widow to run in Japanese by-election to clear lawmaker's name

TOKYO (AFP) — The widow of Shokei Arai, a Japanese lawmaker who hanged himself hours before his impending arrest, announced Wednesday she will run for election to his seat in a fight to clear his name. "The battle waged by my husband has ended. But I will start my own battle as a woman and his wife to prove his innocence," 45-year-old Mariko Arai told a news conference.

Family despair over screaming son

LONDON (AFP) — British doctors are stumped over the case of a three-year-old boy whose inability to speak without shouting has driven his entire family — with the exception of a hard-of-hearing granny — to despair. Tom Coward, who has no problem with his own hearing, shouts so loudly and so often that he has developed nodules on his vocal cords. So far, doctors have been unable to find a medical reason for Tom's condition. With the patience of neighbours also starting to wane, Tom's family have now developed a rewards system to try and get him to lower his voice.